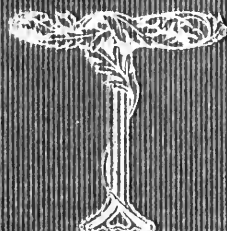


Stories in Rhyme

By
St. John Byer





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Stories in Rhyme

Elegies

and

Lyrics

Poetry should clothe the higher thoughts and aspirations
of an age in emotional, rhythmical language.

By

St. John Dyer

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Wreathed in misty glamour'd romance, high upon its lofty perch
Stood the Abby of Linfarny—more a fortress than a church
Broad, its massive pile loomed grandly 'gainst the sunset's dying flame
When with heavy heart Lord Ronald, thereunto its Dark Tower came.



Lord Ronald to the Dark Tower Came

I

WEATHED in misty glamour'd romance, high upon its lofty perch
Stood the Abbey of Linfarney, more a fortress than a church.
Broad, its massive pile loomed grandly 'gainst the sunset's dying flame
When with heavy heart Lord Ronald thereunto its Dark Tower came.

Came he not as oft accustomed, with proud retinue in state,
But as penitent all lowly, now he entered in its gate.
Then the silent warder wondered why the baron, so well known
As the lord of all that manor, came there moody and alone.

Closely wrapped his mantle round him; mantled he in sable mood,
Greater men have greater sorrows. By the Dark Tower while he stood
Till the swinging gate give entrance, musing, "Open this dark door;
I shall enter and remain here in the shadow evermore.

Then he spake, "Mine Uncle Abbott, tell him I am waiting here.
Ah, I have my tale of trouble, to engage his listening ear."
While in nervous fretful humor, sat he in the dim lit room
Where the frowning arches o'er him made an atmosphere of gloom.

Brooding o'er his disappointment, how his story should unfold;
Would his kinsman share his sorrow, when the tragedy was told?
How explain his late, long absence; why had he thus stood aloof?
He could feel himself there quailing, 'neath the Abbott's mild reproof.

He must tell why he was building splendid castle, not in Spain
But here in romantic Scotland. It unfinished will remain
Monument of love and folly, and as ruined tower and wall
Tell the story of lost splendors his dead hopes this would recall.

Soon his abbott uncle entered, with an air of welcome cheer.
"Ah, indeed! my long lost nephew, glad am I to find you here.
I have wondered at your absence, but I fear your coming now
Bodes no kind or joyous message from your anxious, clouded brow."

"Ah, good father, I have trouble, and in hopeless mood I come
Seeking that within this Abbey I may find a refuge home.
Life for me with its entourage all in wreck and ruin stands.
I have vainly built my castle on the sliding, shifting sands."

"Why my nephew! what has happened? You so hedged 'gainst world and
fate?

I had heard that you were building mansion of a royal state
With some high and lofty purpose—you but left me to surmise
So your story of misfortune takes me with a keen surprise."

"Well, good uncle, hear the story; it is long and somewhat trite.
I will tell it brief and plainly and indulge no fancy flight.
It may sorely tax your patience, tho no drama's storm or stress,
Nor e'en sin, but only weakness that I must to you confess."

Long ago—you well remember—how I lost both wife and child.
Loved so tenderly and deeply, their sad loss had set me wild.
Then I left my lands to travel, seeking climes where sunlight shone
To forget the desolation and the darkness in mine own.

When my grief by time had mellowed, homeward then again I turned
With the hope of here regaining heart and home, for these I yearned.
So I came back to my country now a man of middle age
Learned in worldly wisdom's lessons, read in many a varied page.

My past sorrows I would bury—and with fresher hopes refilled
Be a man among my people—with new work my life rebuild.
And the name of my ancestry I would keep with honor bright,
So its blazoned proud escutcheon should shine forth in nobler light.

Creatures of our circumstances are we, whether great or small.
Chance and opportune occasion ever hold us in their thrall.
Once a countenance flashed on me that it seemed my life would change,
How that beauty fired my spirit, ah it now seems passing strange.

Was it pardonable in me; that mine eye should be beguiled
With love—more as love of parent—by the beauty of a child?
As I looked upon her fondly in the blush of sixteen years.
Aye the roses richer promise in unopened bud appears.

Then I found—that she, an orphan of all kindred was bereft,
Tho of noble lineage came she—yet in poverty now left.
So my kindly service offered—and it met with due regard,
All her ties of blood resigning—she was given as my ward.

Ah—good uncle—say why was it—to my age and settled mood
Naught else ere could give such pleasure, as that face of sweet girlhood.
Her response to my affection, when I held her as mine own
Yielded me a finer pleasure than I e'er before had known.

So, yet to refine her beauty, she should have a mind well stored
With the learning, polish, culture, that the finest schools afford.
I would rear her as my daughter, but still further went my scheme,
That she should stand even nearer—this was my fond, hopeful dream.

Circled by my love and kindness, she a deeper love should learn,
And that due regard for parent, should to love for husband turn.
For this duty I prepared her: to this station should she come,
Stand beside myself as equal, and the idol of my home.

Still this fond design to further. I would build me palace hall,
Fill with luxury and beauty—every want I would forestall.
All the glitter and adornment that delight glad youthful eyes,
She should find a home around her that a queen could not despise.

Plans to rival orient splendors and Aladdin's palace famed
With its brilliant halls and gardens, my ambitious hopes inflamed.
Counting not the costly venture, I unwittingly thus strove
As the Indian king barbaric, building shrine to his own love.

I had gardens, flowered vistas, facing full the Morningland,
Springtime with its freshened verdure, shrubbery and lawns expand.
While outspread to sunny Southland, walks with shading palms o'er grown
Lead to that delicious languor that pervades the Tropic Zone.

Then toward the westward turning, in sweet Autumn's mellow haze
Forests stood in colors vying with the sunset's crimson blaze,
E'en the northward had its outlook to the roseate boreal light
And steel pointed stars of crystal that adorn the polar night.

Fairy scenes of world and travel, I would gather 'round us there,
See them with her eyes of wonder,—youth's enthusiasm share.
This was my hallucination, I indulged the prospect vain.
I should be in her reliving all my youthful life again.

So I thus was planning, building, all absorbed in this fond dream,
Of the world around unmindful, or of Time's onflowing stream.
Strange imaginative creatures, we pursue our visions wild,
Age seems not to bring experience,—man is but an o'er grown child.

At the convent school I placed her, and full often saw her there,
To my heart's desire becoming yet more beautiful and fair.
She toward me was so loving—sure no barrier could stand
'Twixt my heart and the fulfillment of all it had dreamed and planned.

Yet my hope I dared not tell her: I should wait a future hour
When with time she should have bloomed out into womanhood's full flower.
Then reveal to her the splendor I had planned for her surprise,
And to find my love rewarded by the glance of her sweet eyes.

All this seemed so fine, assuring, I could give all she could ask—
Wealth and all its high advantage—in full splendor she should bask.
Nor was I so much the older that my hope be barred by years
That she would yield to my asking—I indulged no doubts or fears.

Who can fathom the emotions, or the mind of bright girlhood?
Why had I not well remembered love ne'er follows gratitude.
Love is ever a delirium that no science can explain,
And against its fickle choosing—right and reason plead in vain.

Well, to make the story shorter, when the time had nearly come
That my fond dreams I should tell her, that for her I built this home
To afford her every pleasure she could have desired or hoped,—
I was summoned to the convent,—she with lover had eloped.

Startled by the shock so sudden, I indeed was sorely tried
Lest I should betray my weakness, taxed my utmost strength and pride.
I stood there bewildered, staggering, seeking some support to find,
As one by a stroke of lightning stricken senseless, dumb and blind.

All my castle 'round me crumbling, hope's grand pile in ruins hurled,
From the realm of love's enchantment, I was left in desert world.
Life lost all that held me to it, had I fallen in my tomb
Death itself that ends all suffering had not brought so dire a doom."

Then the Abbott interrupting: "Ah! 'tis ordered well above,
That Death stands not at the bidding of a hopeless human love.
But sought you no further knowledge; all about this sad affair?"
"Nay—I had no heart to ask it—whither fled I did not care."

"It were well that you should know it—who hath stolen away your ward.
For he is a brilliant scion of a famous English lord.
But, pursued by your retainers, lest he reach not safety's line,
Fearing capture and your vengeance, they are refuged at this shrine.

And he sought that in true marriage I unite them in this hour,
Thus prepared for what might happen should he fall into your power."
Then the baron answered firmly—"She indeed shall have her choice
And against the bans and marriage I have no restraining voice.

By her own hand she hath broken that fond idol I adored,
In my heart it lies in ruins nevermore to be restored.
For I would not now receive her tho, she in my power lay.
Do your office Uncle Abbott I will give the bride away."

"Nobly hast thou spoken Baron. I am prouder of our race
That so sorely tried and tempted you will not your blood disgrace.
Manhood shines forth from you bravely with the brilliance of a star
As you rise above the prompting—All is fair in love and war.

She hath shown by her own choosing—she had never been true wife,
And that, finding after marriage, had embittered all your life.
Tho' now sore and broken hearted, you should thank God for this fate
That your love's mistaken idol, was unveiled ere 'twas too late."

"Aye! and yet," rejoined the baron, "This poor comfort doth impart
Unto him whose life is shattered—blasted hopes and broken heart.
When I peer into my future I see naught but ceaseless pain.
Would that I might pass in darkness, never look on day again."

"Nay" said Abbott, "this wild passion soon will wear itself away.
You will live and be the nobler—life will bring you fairer day.
Disappointments and their sorrows surely wear away with time.
And as dark clouds passing o'er us—leave the skies a brighter clime."

* * * * *

WHEN he stood beside the altar, pallid and all tightly nerved,
Strong, and in his pride resolving by no outburst to be swerved;
He would bear the wound all bravely and no one should ever see
In his inmost heart the suffering, e'en tho' death wound it should be.

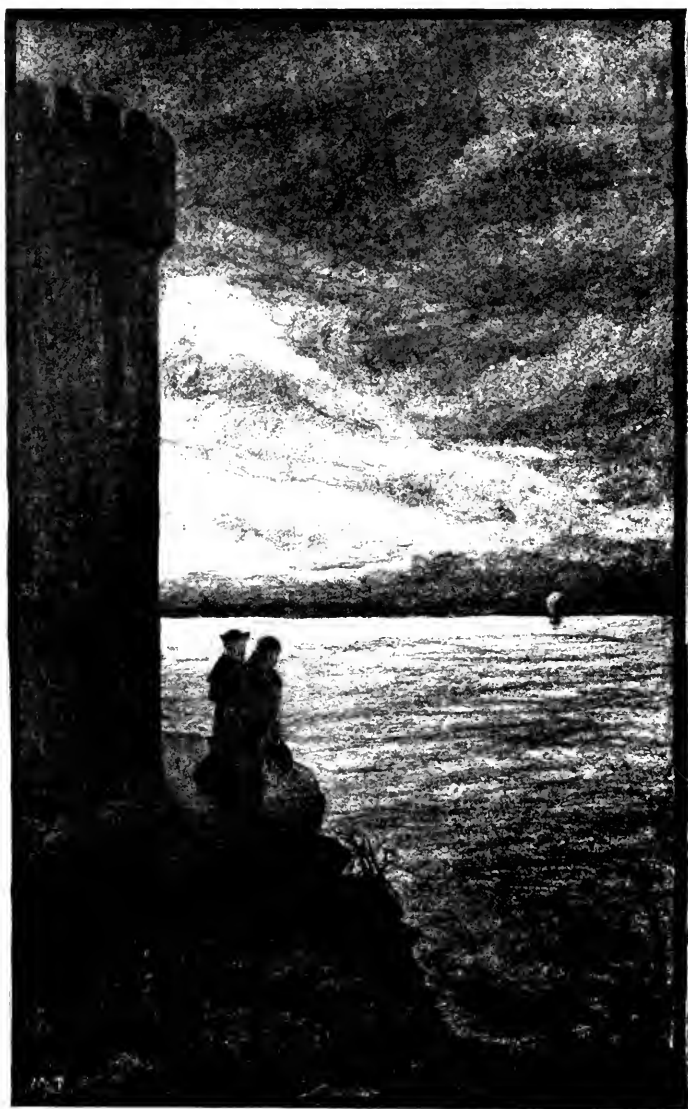
Yet as Hilda looked upon him, then her woman's eye could find
In his mien all that was hidden, clear its meaning she divined.
Then she wakened as from dreaming, saw the truth with sudden start.
He, the grander man had loved her, changed were currents of her heart.

Prone she sank before the altar and for his forgiveness plead.
Then he gently, kindly, raised her, and to her entreaty said
While denying her embraces: "Nay, now go unto your lord,
You have chosen him before me, you must keep your faith and word."

"All my heart, life, wealth, and honors, I before your feet had laid
And for you my castle building as for wife and queen I made.
But your own hand now hath razed it—thrown away my love and care,
Left my home and heart in ruins that no change can e'er repair."

Then the truth full flashed upon her; tempted to wild escapade
By enthusiasm romantic she life's grand mistake had made.
But there now was no atonement: by her choice she must abide.
To her lord she turned all weeping, took place mutely by his side.

But the marriage ceremony seemed more as a funeral rite.
There a spectre stood foreboding—fateful shadow of that night.
Came the young lord to the baron pleadingly to make amends.
Humbly asking his forgiveness—"Could they not live now as friends?"



Said the Baron—"I forgive you yet one promise I exact.
This my child must be well cherished—loved in every word and act.
She my ward, and I had loved her, as young heart can never do.
Youth and nature fought against me, now her future is with you."

Silent was the parting moment. Holding by the chancel rail
Stood the Baron, cold and stately, as a statue chill and pale.
Hilda mutely turned toward him—as for blessing she appealed.
But his glance spake more than language, and his marble lips were sealed.

So they turned away in silence—for no parting word was said.
And her young lord bore her weeping as tho faint and almost dead.
"Hilda, why are you unhappy?" But her soul was overcast
By foreboding of misfortune that should come e'er night had past.

There was no gay bridal party as they went down to the strand,
Where his shallop now was waiting round to sail for English land,
And he noted not the nightrack nor the moon's pale sickly form,
And, unmanned by Hilda's weeping, marked no sign of coming storm.

Ah, 'twere pity, for these lovers should have found more generous fate.
Love should have led up to open Paradise's golden gate.
But together, mute and muffled, from that dusky Twilight shore,
Sailed they out unto the darkness, and the pair were seen no more.

* * * * *

"COME" said Abbott—"from these arches where chill gloomy spectres stalk,
Out in freer air of gloaming shall we have our evening walk.
You must rouse you from this stupor lest you do yourself a wrong;
Brace yourself to nobler manhood—you must suffer and be strong.

Let your pride of blood uphold you—you have braved this ordeal so.
Have repressed your own strong spirit, in its passion's fiercest throe.
Grander than war's bravest hero, he that ruleth his own soul
Shall stand higher than the conqueror on earth's brightest honor roll."

Thru the cloister to the highway leading out on rocky crest
That o'er looked the wave horizon to the cloud-bedarkening west,
There stood they, in silence gazing at the new moon pale and dim.
While, a sadness came upon them like the sigh of Twilight hymn.

“Life to me,” then spake the Baron, “seems alike this ocean vast:
All uncertain but the promise of a clouded gloom o’er cast.
Dull expanse, thereon no pathway and no guiding star of hope,
As o’er depths of death and danger I my course must blindly grope.

“Come,” said Abbott, “with full sorrow for the grief that you must feel,
Yet unto your higher reason I must make a strong appeal.
Round this woman, love, and marriage, narrowly your life was wound.
But was it the noblest purpose wisdom’s choice for you had found?

Truly marriage is most holy, if therein be no offense,
By our church ’tis consecrated, as among its sacraments;
But it is not for man’s pleasure nor indeed a saving grace—
He must take it as a duty, by it to preserve the race.

Nor must he be there expectant of the joys of Paradise,
For more often will its burdens make life one long sacrifice.
Love is oft a wild delusion offering pleasure’s highest charms
Which as blooming flowers, wither when clasped tightly in our arms.

Love, in age of classic splendor, was an instinct low and coarse,
By the gods whom they had fashioned, made corruption’s fountain source.
Patriarch and Grecian Sages as by history clearly shown
Held their women in close bondage—so true marriage was unknown.

Tho the female form they sculptured in the highest beauty lined,
Yet the bond of their attraction was an instinct unrefined.
Yielding free rein to their pleasure no disgust gave, or offense,
For high spiritual longing never veiled the coarser sense.

But Christ came and gave the woman by the man her proper place;
Taught that man must rule his passion to attain his saving grace.
And, in that celestial Kingdom He would bring upon the earth,
Man and woman stood together—every soul of equal worth.

Coming down the Middle Ages in the realm of quaint Romance,
Chivalry’s high aspirations gave the world a grand advance,
For the sweet Madonna worship roused in man a purer flame
And an ideal devotion void of every sensual aim.

Thus in course of evolution, as the intellect and mind,
Sexual love, from lower instinct into sentiment refined
Still progresses with the ages till such chasteness it attain
It becomes diviner passion, freed from every earthly strain.

For when man looks on the woman—sees in outline of her face
That refinement he would fain have to perpetuate his race,
This instinct, e'en in the lowly, is the world's uplifting power
That mankind march to attainment of life's full and perfect flower.

E'er arises nobler offspring from affection undefiled,
Thus parental love reforming—finer lineaments in child.
Hope looks down the distant future, when the human shall appear,
Freed from all its coarser nature to attain angelic sphere.

Immortality's fond longing (this is love's divinest flame)
Lights in man his one grand passion: that his heritage may claim
Life and part in future ages, so therein he still find place.
This may be the Life Eternal that is promised to the race."

"Aye," said Baron, "this is warrant for my love's despairing mood;
That I hand not down to future mine own progeny and blood,
That, with this immortal longing, therein I shall have no part.
So this passing into darkness with its sorrow blinds my heart."

"But this giving life to future, love's prime purpose for the man,
This, if I may judge you rightly, was not your chief aim and plan.
You had gathered all around you here to make your heaven below.
All was for your present pleasure that no future cared to know.

Tho you built your splendid castle, as for ideal love alone,
You will find, if you search deeper, self was its foundation stone.
All that upon self is founded will as surely come to grief.
You had soon found to your sorrow that its ecstasy were brief.

Such love is a selfish passion, idealize it as you will,
At its root is sensual pleasure—this its prime emotion still,
And, like appetite of hunger, when too full and satiate,
From its table turns with loathing, aye, oftimes it turns to hate.

Nature thus hath queer revenges: when the cup too full is filled
It o'erflows in effervescence—all except the dregs is spilled.
Love that overtops discretion and the sober mean transcends,
Wisdom tells that loves so violent are as prone to violent ends.

Love pursuit is strangely fatuous; what we ardently desire
When it comes in our possession seems as suddenly to tire.
This the law of our nature: all our pleasures dear and fond
Are reached only in "becoming"—and are placed in the "Beyond."

"Then is nature a delusion—love of beauty but a snare?"
"Aye, for each man counts as nothing but the race is nature's care.
Color and perfume of flowers draw the fertilizing bee,
And man yielding to his instinct follows as unconsciously.

By her lure of promised pleasure she this passion hath instilled
So it lead unto that union where her purposes fulfilled.
Then the flower blooms no longer, but to withered stalk may change,
Yet love there must find contentment, from that bond must never range.

You had held these love-chase pleasures after you had reached its goal,
But your wealth and power never nature's course could backward roll.
She hath laws fixed and eternal caring not for great or small
You had lived the same old story and the common fate of all."

"Why desire created in us if not given full scope and aim?"
"Nay, that passion have full ventage, this indeed were monstrous claim,
Only made by those low spirits crawling in earth's mire and dust
Who would level all the barriers 'gainst the wild play of their lust.

Human passion as a power, must be bridled down with force,
Held by strong rein firm and strictly, lest it fly the lawful course.
Life's wild energies within us, unrestrained by wisdom's hand,
Would revert us to the savage and run riot o'er the land.

Voice of God thru our own conscience, speak to us in language plain,
We must curb our coarser natures for our spiritual gain.
Fleshy lusts thus mortifying, holding them in keen restraint
Makes the rule of our religion and the virtue of the saint.

And the world's divinest spirits, tho with passions fully manned,
Yet they conquered these and held them down with firm repressing hand.
And 'tis nature's primal precept early taught in history's school:
He must learn, who would rule others, his own soul and self to rule."

"But what comfort," said the Baron, "and what solace can this bring?"
"That you put love in subjection, let your reason rule as king?"
"Rise o'er this infatuation, learn the stoic's nobler mood
To receive with calm composure both the evil and the good."

For life walketh in vain shadow, cloud and sunshine interchanged,
From today's hope on the morrow, we may sharply be estranged.
Nor can we peer in the future—'gainst what fate we may be thrown,
Life, a path o'er this dark ocean, and the farther shore unknown.

"What indeed are we here placed for? What God's purpose you may ask?
He has made the clearest answer. Each is given his daily task,
With the talents He provided, and for their account will call.
Everyone must faithful labor for the general good of all.

This is serving God all truly, looking not for recompense,
Pleasure in such toil and labor will pervade as higher sense,
For she is a fleeting spirit and when for herself pursued
As the gold at foot of rainbow; she will e'er the chase elude.

And if you would have true pleasure, then remand her to the rear,
Foward press in nobler effort, she will follow, never fear.
Not for self, but live for others, for their good your wealth employ,
And in this self abnegation,—you will find life's highest joy.

Loved and lost; this disappointment oft gives man a nobler mind.
For this grief here in the Abbey you full sympathy will find.
Men whose loss and deeper suffering, write their histories on each face,
But their brows by sorrow's patience are crowned with diviner grace.

For their spirits rose above it in retired monastic life.
They now find a loftier pleasure than delight in child and wife.
Love unselfish hath no limits, spreads on all the world around
As its one divine example in Christ's world-wide love is found.

For the love of wife and children limits man to his own hearth.
Noble, tho yet all absorbing, and it pins him down to earth.
So our church, for higher service, bans her priests the marriage vows,
For devotion undivided,—she must be his only spouse.

Yet, in their entire surrender, there is found a higher joy.
Nature's pleasures are remittent and more oft in surfeit cloy.
But the reflex never shadows those high spiritual delights
Which like music grow yet sweeter in their echoing cadence flights."

"Then I fain must join in with you, so I may attain this grace?"
"Nay, indeed!" rejoined the Abbot, "God hath given you higher place.
You can serve His purpose better with the talents in your hands.
Be a father, brother, helper, to all dwelling on your lands.

And in place of splendid castle for your grandeur and your pride,
Build a thousand humbler dwellings, find a love in each fireside.
Give your wealth and work for others, health and joy spread far around.
Then your own life more abundant with their blessings will be crowned."

Said the Baron "Thanks mine Uncle! Wisdom's words are but cold cheer
And upon the broken spirit, fall they as on alien ear.
But from your last exhortation I take comfort and may learn
That my life, love's thwarted current, may in other channels turn.

Hard it is to thus surrender this fond hope I held so long.
Help me, God, I will surmount it. I will suffer and be strong.
Finding some new light to follow I will forth o'er life's dark main.
But one leading star is darkened—I will never love again.

Oh! the chill of desolation! In love's chamber dark and mute
There alike my heartstrings broken stands the silent unstrung lute.
Yet its music echoes, birdlike, 'round that ruined nest will fly,
I will never cease to hear them, they will haunt me till I die.

And I cry out my remonstrance in this dark, despairing hour.
Why was I thus made the football of Fate's unrelenting power?
Why this love's deluding mirage that led on my earnest gaze
Thus to fade and leave me wandering in the desert's blinding maze?"

Then the Abbot coming nearer—drew his arm around him there.
“Oh! my son, I too have suffered, and I know 'tis hard to bear.
From a love so fondly cherished, it doth tear the soul to part.
But be of good strength and courage, time will heal the broken heart.”

“And moreover,” said the Abbot, “your heart’s strong desire to live
In the future, other channels yet a surer plan may give.
Men who mourned their lives as childless oft have stood before the rest
With more claim on future than those with a numerous offspring blest.

For it seemed that all their life blood went in acts of heart and mind
Leaving little of the force for reproduction of their kind.
They, indeed, are the Immortals, they who toiled and sacrificed
E’en as He who stands before all, the Eternal Master Christ!

But beside this, yet remember, every noble act or thought
In the web of Time is woven and adown the ages brought.
Tho it may not shine forth lustrous, yet 'tis hidden in that chain,
Weaving silent influences that will come to light again.

And the deeds of love and kindness in our daily life impart
Finer joys than those achievements in the higher realms of art,
Consciousness of acts unselfish warms the heart with brighter flame
Than world-ringing shallow plaudits or the strife for future fame.

Those high dreams by fond ambition on the cloudland world enlind,
What but vain phantasmagoria they who reach them ever find?
For the bitterest disappointment lurks behind these gorgeous schemes
When the striving dreamer awakens from his empty, fleeting dreams.

So, when genius may reach greatness, 'tis not by ballooning flights,
Step by step still plodding upward, thus he gains the dizzy heights.
Then, to find himself all lonely, gladly would he thence descend
To be one among his fellows, grasp the hand and heart of friend.

I have shown you this life’s survey, how pursuit of love or fame
Often is but fond delusion, rarely reaching its full aim,
And their promise of keen pleasures from our grasp so strangely slips
As the sweets that so allure us turn to ashes on the lips.

Who may claim to be the noblest? He who with his fellows stands,
Does the duty lying nearest, works with strong and loving hands,
And to those who are around him gives full measure of his heart,
Sharing all their joys and sorrows, of their lives becoming part.

Not confined to our self limit, our philosophy doth teach,
We become incorporated in all that our love can reach.
Man may have his nerve sensation, in mute nature taking part,
He may feel the flowers growing, as tho rooted in his heart.

Keener links of fond affection may bind him to host of friends,
And all joys of life are heightened as the circle far extends
While the grief and sorrow burdens, we must bear along life's road
Are divided and thus lightened, when the many bear the load:

Live for others: this more Godlike than ambition's selfish chase,
And in worlds new golden era it will claim a higher place,
Christ gave forth in his last judgment naught to mighty deeds or fame,
But crowned him who helped the needy, fed the hungry in His name,

This is wisdom's final message—who with good deeds life doth crown,
These shall fold love's mantle o'er him when in death he lieth down.
He shall live in hearts of others who his memory green will keep,
And the flowers of love's remembrance, grow above his dreamless sleep.

Nor must he wait that hereafter: warmly in the living now
He will feel the laurel chaplet as love's halo round his brow.
Nor regardant of the future he his destiny can brave
And enshrouded in love's garments—dread no chillness in the grave."

* * * * *

GAZING out o'er slumbering ocean sank the moon beneath a cloud,
Darkly in the west arising, lightning wreathed and whirlwind browed.
"This night will be fierce and stormy—and I dread the tempest's wrath
Fast the night gloom falls around us, let us on our homeward path."

Thence returning to the Abbey, now the supper hour was near,
And for Ronald's fainting humor, Abbot ordered wine to cheer.
"Came, my nephew," said he kindly, "Times there are when wine is good,
When the heart is blind and cheerless, needing warmer life and blood."

"Drink and drown your disappointment. I, indeed, have done the same,
Nor indulging in its solace have I held myself to blame.
There are times when hearts are sinking neath their load of grief and care,
And the wine may give us buoyance that we drown not in despair."

* * * * *

AFTER storm that night Lord Ronald fain would fall in realms of sleep,
But his heart chords yet were throbbing and his slumber was not deep.
Strange sick fancies yet pursuing—drove his drowsing thoughts astray
In wild dreamland pictures hovering on the borderland of day.

By a lonely hearthstone sitting where the fire no longer burned
And no hope of its relighting, thus his heart to ashes turned.
Then he felt a presense nearing, was it Sorrow's muffled tread
That above his life's horizon should her chill, dark mantle spread?

But a kindly hand then touched him, gently speaking, "Fear not thou,
I am He that wore world sorrow's crown of thorns upon my brow.
Drink this bitter chalice bravely, grief not endless thine shall be,
Thou hast lost thy life to save it,—Come; rise up and follow me."

Fain he turned him to the vision, but the dream took airy flight
And his waking eyes were opened full into the morning light.
There upon the rich-carved mantel by some artist pencil lined
Full before him Christ was pictured giving sight unto the blind.

Christ, from that dim form historic thou the ages far adown,
Brighter grows, each painter lining, o'er His brow more hallowed crown.
Every nobler life has striven thereupon to add some line,
That He stand, the Incarnation in Manhood, of the Divine.

Every virtue too exalted for mortality's weak frame
Has been mantled thus upon Him, clothed around His sacred name.
Human imperfections banished, in His lineaments we find
That yet growing, ideal, Godman of the world's expanding mind.

So transfigured in His coming down the avenue of time
By each nobler mind's ascriptions into character sublime,
That by following the pathway where with glowing feet He trod,
Man may change himself in likeness to the image of his God.

Was it strange that here Lord Ronald, in heart chamber, vacant, bare,
Now should open door inviting Him the Christ to enter there?
His example gave new courage, he a better life would plan,
And he rose up in that morning, sadder, wiser, nobler man.

Not as he, told of in Scripture, who with empty, vacant mind,
Went forth seeking of his fellows boon companions he might find.
Took him seven other spirits, his familiars and the worst,
So the last stage of his revel was e'en wilder than the first.

But Lord Ronald had no spirit to go out in world once more,
That its whirl and dissipations salve his disappointment o'er.
Here with his wise Kinsman resting slowly broken threads should wind
Into ties of new affection, higher purpose life should find.

Harkening to the call of wisdom, he would choose a higher aim.
Then the words that Christ had spoken, when the rich youth to him came.
"Feed the widow and the orphan, be a help to them that need.
E'en as I"—this His religion, more than prayer, or faith or creed.

* * * * *

YET a sadder trial waited, e'er that fateful days was o'er,
He was called by his retainers, down upon the shelving shore,
There lay Hilda, drowned and dripping, aye but yesterday's sweet flower,
Now her marriage robe a death-shroud, she the bride of one short hour.

Words are cold, faint, and unmeaning, now Lord Ronald's grief to tell
As he looked on her dead features, this dear child he loved so well.
But the sea could tell no story, how the storm-winds, whispering breath
From their high hopes called the lovers, to look full in face of death.

There together by the seawraith in its chilly arms engrasped,
Yet its cold and slimy fingers—love's last death embrace unclasped,
Drew the young lord to his burial, down in deepest, darkest cave,
Threw his flower on the bosom of surf-heaving landward wave.

Ah, the last night he remembered, how he watched that shallop sail
Out upon the twilit ocean—feeling his strong spirit fail
And his rending heart slow sinking like that disappearing barge
Out and down in utter darkness, over life's horizon marge.

His dead heart was carried with them there to find an ocean grave,
Buried deep in kind oblivion, as beneath dark Lethe's wave.
Now flashed back his strange forboding, how enfolded in night's gloom
That barge seemed a funeral cortege, moving down to Death and doom.

As he gazed on her calm features death her last thoughts would reveal
So her chill and silent glances looked to him in mute appeal.
Back unto his love returning she for his forgiveness plead.
Ah! what fond heart could resist it, that last pleading of the dead?

Then he stood as Israel's monarch, when the fatal news had come
That the son so loved had perished, his proud, erring, Absalom.
Now bereft and broken-hearted, felt alone a father's pride
Thus above his dead child mourning, "Would God I for thee had died!"

Ah! could his lips send their message, as they touched her pallid brow,
To the heart so cold and silent, that all was forgiven now.
Love for her he still would cherish, and in her sweet image find,
Leading him, his child, wife, angel, till death should the vision blind.

* * * * *

TIME worn on, and this grand Castle he had builded for her home
Was transformed, and thereto added chapel and memorial dome,
Underneath her tomb erected—this should be sweet Hilda's shrine
And the place there ever after with her memory entwine.

And a Convent there was founded, on that Castle's looming pride
Where a Sisterhood of Mercy Charity's kind mission plied.
There a numerous family gathered, and when he amongst them stood
Found his life again worth living, crowned with love and gratitude.

With a changed and chastened spirit, ranking, pride in blood and race,
Seemed to be obliterated, and to finer traits gave place.
He went down among his people, helping them with generous hand
Till his presence as the sunlight, made warmth glow throughout his land.

Every humble home and fireside he would visit, far and near
As their benefactor welcomed, bringing comfort and good cheer.
Thus the current of love feeling that home's narrow channel fills
O'er his broad domain dispersing, found a thousand outlet rills.

Holding yet his vows of Knighthood, but they took a higher quest,
Striving for the weaker brother, the down-trodden and oppressed.
And no errantry was needed, all adventures he could ask
Here were in his near surrounding, here he found herculean task.

And he did his duty bravely, by his character was shown
How he unto nobler purpose made lost love a stepping stone.
By his stronger resolution moped he not in morbid strife,
Broken heart could pave the roadway, upward into grander life.

Finer flowers from angel footsteps, will more often grow above
Debris soil of hopes downtrodden, and the withered leaves of love.
From the crushed and contrite spirit, sweeter fragrance is distilled
Than from soul wrapped in contentment—whose desires are all fulfilled.

Nature hath her compensations—and a balm for every pain,
Time doth often bring the solace, loss was better than the gain.
They the more enjoy the sunshine who have grief's chill mantle worn,
And there blooms the sweetest roses from dark sorrow's crown of thorn.

When the heart finds laid in ashes all its selfish, low desires,
Then upon its chastened hearthstone it may light the nobler fires
That shall warm the hearts of others, in their glory it may shine,
Showing thus the human spirit near approaching the Divine.

* * * * *

THIS may be a tame denouncement. Passion crossed e'er has the mood
To flare out into the Tragic—and to end in fire and blood.
Since the age when Helen's love-glance lit the fires that could destroy
Noblest of her Grecian kindred ere they had dismantled Troy.

But those days of blood-atonement, would God they were o'er and past,
That the forms for our heroics, in new models should be cast.
Like this, my self-conquering hero who could nobler victory boast
Than his ancestor Crusaders warring 'gainst the Paynim host.

Aye there is a bravery grander than that of the sword and force
For the savage, fighting, instinct is but nature's first resource.
And when threatened, poorest birdling, will face death for nestling brood
As the beast for lair and young ones—yet they boast no hero mood.

Heroism rises higher, fighting dragons fierce and foul,
And the unseen shapes of evil—that around our pathway prowl,
Wrongs, outrages and oppressions, grinding poverty and want,
And the wild and ghastly demons that the underworld can haunt.

And within, that darker struggle to be master and control
Selfish, wild-beast passions lurking in the caverns of the soul,
There more treacherous fight and fiercer, needing braver heart and mind
Than the hotblood rush of battle in fair open rank enlined.

Here indeed the noblest conflict, where the Godlike shows in man,
And Lord Ronald here was victor, bravest he of all his clan.
Tho he bore no blood-stained chaplet, he could claim the higher place
Standing forth—in Stoic virtue, mantled with a Christian grace.

Tho they lie in crypt of Abbey, sculptured in their warrior forms
Belted with their swords and bearing proud escutcheoned coat-of-arms,
In enduring memory Ronald carved his grander, more loved, name,
Nor unfruitful was the hour—when he to the Dark Tower came.



The Forest-Fringed Valley

VERDANT slopes from purple hill-crests, crowned by fringing skirts of
wood

Merged in misty glens, converging where the happy valley stood.
Widening open to the southwind, that upon its balmy wing
Wafted there from tropic ocean, flower-perfumed breath of spring.

Canopied by azure curtains,—thru them sunlight splendor shone,
Or at times were clouds as mist-veil o'er its smiling beauty thrown.
Yet the lowering skies were softened in rose-ashen mantling pall,
And the gentle rains descended, as the dew on Hermon fall.

Down the vale a bright stream wandered, fed by brooks and sparkling rills
From the reservoirs in uplands, bursting forth 'neath frowning hills.
Health and joy came with its current to the verdant meads around,
Where the flocks and herds were grazing,—pleasant pastures there they found.

On the hilltops loomed the forests, like embattled giants high,
Towering on the crests of mountains, 'gainst the north and western sky.
As tho' Pan and kindly Nature here had reared a rampart vast
To withstand the siege of Winter, and his rude unwelcome blast.

So the storm-sweep of the tempest was toned down to summer gale,
E'en the Northwind's voice was tempered e'er it reached this sheltered vale
There chill Winter seemed no rougher than a crisp October morn
In the frosty-scented orchard, when the rime is on the corn.

Land of pasture, grass and flowers, whence the milk and honey flow,
As Jerusalem the Golden, in bright Paradise aglow.
Pleasant as the Vale of Tempe or the plains of Marathon;
Nor was fairer or more verdant, island vale of Avalon.

* * * * *

WHERE each sparkling fountain gushing from the breast of Mother Earth
As the ocean foam to Venus,—to its Nymph had given birth.
And Narcissus in the wavelet where his mirrored image shone
Grew enamoured, scarcely conscious that the beauty was his own.

And the high groves had their Dryads, ev'ry tree a chosen home
Spread around with velvet carpet, daisy-pied grass-covered loam
There too dwelt the Nymph, sweet Echo, by the forest frontier bounds.
With her mellow voice repeating all the valley's distant sounds.

Great Diana and Apollo, bade all vulgar feet avaunt,
Nor the hunter or the woodman should profane this hallowed haunt.
Only they who loved the forests as first temples of their race
Like the Druids or the Northmen, should invade this sacred place.

For as Gothic minster stood they with their groined cloisters high;
Hued mosaic leaves of foliage, roofed against the azure sky.
Lofty columns far up-reaching,—vaulting arches overspanned,
Domes,—high forest-choirs and transepts opening forth on every hand.

Long pierced lancet windows reddened with the dawnlight's roseate rays,
Or the western aureoles crimsoned by sun-set's flamboyant blaze.
Fading vistas thru dark cloisters, there imposed a solemn fear,
And the awe of dim cathedrals filled the shadowed atmosphere.

There resounded forest organ,—from the loud, chill, sullen roar;
Hoarse Euroclydon that calleth from the frigid Arctic shore
To the mild and mellow murmur from the Southland's balmy zone,
When the windharp in the treetop, echoed its Eolian tone.

When beyond the darkling woodlands, skies of day had taken flight
And came starry watches peeping thru the mantle of the night,
Then a deeper mood pervading,—there the listening soul could hark
To the whisperings of the Immortals thru the weird and silent dark.

As in days of classic splendor, veiled and mantled priestess sate
'Neath the shadows of the forest, giving forth decrees of Fate,
When the voice of Jove,—All Father, by his oracle there spoke
Thru the awe-inspiring silence under dark Dodona's oak.

* * * * *

IN that valley far sequestered from the great world's thoroughfares,
From its din and dusty marches, from its want and worrying cares
Lived a happy race of people,—shepherds,—tillers of the field,
Gatherers of fruits and bounty, that the fertile valleys yield.

Free and equal in their living,—there no haughty palace stood.
Lording o'er wide scope of country, in its sullen hardihood
Frowning down on huts and hovels, that as menials around
E'er will gather;—ever shadows by the highest lights are found.

So lived they as those in Eden,—happy, innocent, and blest,
E'er ambition tempting knowledge—filled men's souls with wild unrest
For not yet the wily serpent had crept in, with devilish vice
To corrupt their gentler natures, and to ruin Paradise.

* * * * *

BUT as in the olden story, Mammon's minions came at last
With their greedy eyes of avarice on this fated valley cast.
Little cared they for its beauty; their one craze was lust for gold;
And stored in these virgin forests, there they saw a wealth untold.

Then the Juggernaut of Progress, with broad iron wheels that crush
All the beauty in its pathway, as the wild tornado's rush,
Ploughed its course into this valley, changing its clear crystal clime
With its hideous mills and engines, vomiting their smoke and grime.

Boastingly did they march forward, grinding up the gores grand
Lined with noblest picture-writing by Omnipotent's own hand,
To spread forth the shallow journals, filled with painted jokes and jibes
Or with weak sensation stories,—moral shyster diatribes.

This is Progress with a vengeance;—such our modern classic schools
For the higher educating men-machines and human tools
Stifled in twist bricks and mortar:—Aye far nobler rudest child
Harking back to fields and nature,—to the call of wood and wild.

* * * * *

FRIGHTED were the Nymphs and Dryads,—flying sought they Father
Pan

Where he dwelt hard by the mountains, far away from haunts of man.
Then with plaint and pleading voices unto him their grievance told;
How the wild surge of destruction, o'er their forest home had rolled.

That coarse grimy-visaged Vandals, with sharp weapons did invade, —
Saws and axes, grinding toothed wheel, like fierce butchers at their trade,
Levelling down the noblest forests,—towering trees they overturned
Leaving stumpage—ragged ruin, even that, o'er scorched and burned.

All the floral decoration that their forest halls had graced
Tapestries in green enwoven, festoons by the fairies traced,
Trailing vines and blooming flowers that filled home with beauty's pride
Thus torn down by ruthless Vandals;—trampled into ruin wide.

When he saw his homeless children, Father Pan was sorely moved.
“Where is Echo, sweetest daughter, whom so tenderly I loved?”
“Aye” they answered, “She is lying neath the fallen forest crushed,
Voiceless as a broken lute-string—all her music mute and hushed.”

Then rose Father Pan the Mighty, rose in wrath and righteous ire
Spake he nature's deepest language that Apollo could inspire.
With loud voice alike the thunders that adown steep Sinai rolled,
When descending, dread Jehovah to his people spake of old.

* * * * *

“**A**YE, with perverse fools of mortals, must the gods still plead in vain,
When seized with this craze of Plutus, and his cursed thirst for gain?
We had shown and fully warned them, so this danger they avoid
That it were both crime and blunder, should their forests be destroyed.

“Base ingrates for what we gave them, fertile plains and verdant meads,
Cornucopia full and bounteous,—all sufficient for their needs.
Nature's beauty, health and pleasures,—there a nobler life could rise
Reaching highest goal of mortals in their earthly Paradise.

“Why not be content and thankful,—thus ambition's lures to shun
Know,—that not by grasping avarice highest goal of life is won.
And that Mammon's lusting hunger, like the greed of filthy swine
Will quench out of human spirit, all the godlike and divine.

“E’en as long-eared Midas clutching all earth’s treasures for himself,
Finding when his prayer was granted, his whole world was changed to pelf.
And no drop of crystal water might appease his burning thirst.
All he touched was changed to metal—thus by the Immortals curst.

“This debasing lust of Plutus, that invades the human breast
As a fierce devouring avarice, giving them no peace or rest
Till they grasp earth’s stored up treasures, rear their palaces of gold
High unto indignant heaven, as the Titans did of old.

“They shall find the same destruction. Father Jove his lightnings hath
And upon the proud and haughty, fall they in their fiercest wrath.
As upon Assyrian Babel, built on shore of deluge wide
When Jehovah’s voice spake ruin, scattering all their vaunting pride.

* * * * *

THEY who strive for riches only—aye the dollar they may find
Till sunlike it sear their vision, scorch their sight all beauty-blind,
And those nations whom the Immortals would destroy, they madden first
With fierce Mammon’s money madness, and its fiery unquenched thirst.

“E’en old kindly Mother Nature, strict doth her revenges keep.
They who sow the wind, as surely shall dark ruin’s whirlwind reap,
They who mar her face of beauty, soon will learn her vengeful power,
How alike old Father Saturn, she her children can devour.

“From the fire and flood invasion guarded was this valley, fair.
But my ramparts they have levelled, now defenceless, open, bare
To their enemies left naked, for no forest’s stalwart forms
Stand with giant arms withholding falling heavens and driving storms.

“Now the tempest and the cloudburst, shall above that valley sweep.
And adown the hill-sides rushing, there shall foam the torrent deep
Tearing into ranch and gully,—till no verdure there remains
Then wind-dried into a desert—thus shall stand its arid plains.

“For the dews and rains all vainly will they then to heaven plead
But the brazen skies above them, sore shall mock their urgent need
There no outstretched hands of forest, foliage, meads of grass and flowers
With their incense prayers to cloudland, will bring down the genial showers.

"And Apollo's smile benignant, now shall turn to burning stare.
Searing up the grassy meadows, into sand-dunes waste and bare.
All the pleasant life there nurtured, all the beauty once outspread
As a heath by simoon blasted, shall lie withered, dark and dead!"

* * * *

THUS spake Pan. They all unconscious, self-betrayed and evil-starred
Had surrendered their protection; sold for pelf their forest guard.
Came there luxury and riot, and the booming golden shower
Brought the reeling saturnalia, when wine-madness rules the hour.

But the fault was not forgotten—followed chapter of their ills.
As though hidden foes were camping, just beyond their guarded hills.
Rose they soon in fierce invasion, cloud-winged armies darkly form
Volleying thunders their alarum, demons driving on the storm.

Firing down the hurtling hail-stones, crushing all within their path.
Black-browed swirl tornado, shrieking as cloud-giant in his wrath
All the evil powers of cloudland, with full vengeance o'er it burst
As tho this devoted valley by heaven's interdict were curst.

* * * *

TIME brought change and those remaining, when its fuller life had flown
Wonder at the changing climate, and their paths now sterile grown;
How the dews once gently falling, and the mist-like rolling rains
Come in angry storm and cloudburst to submerge their fertile plains.

As old age's deep ploughed wrinkles come upon the face of youth
So that smiling land was furrowed by rude gullied gaps uncouth.
Torn the soil from off the uplands, leaving white the blanching stones
That bulge through their sloughed-off covering, as uncanny fleshless bones.

There the fountains neath the hill sides, whence the beauteous Nymphs had fled
Wept a while for their departure, then were tear-dried, seared, and dead;
E'en the merry gushing brooklet that adown the valley ranged
Doth not yet "go on forever" but to stagnant pools hath changed.

And that country's face seems weary as with burden of the years
E'en the Springtime passing o'er it, but a fleeting glance appears;
As the countenance of dotage, that youth's memory beguiles
With some oldtime reminiscence into wan regretful smiles.

* * * *

AYE—old kindly Mother Nature, with her gifts of love untold
Yet hath laws of iron rigor, as grim Rhadamanthus old.
Though she yield her treasures freely from a never-failing breast
And the children who obey her with due harvest shall be blest,—

Yet for those whose grasping avarice seeks out every hidden hoard,
Fells the forests, digs the treasures, she for future ages stored,
They indeed may find and plunder all the hoarded wealth she hath
But her blighting curse will follow, as dark shadow on their path.

Cursed by fierce ambition's hunger—they may pile and flaunt their wealth,
By the gorge of luxury tempted, o'er the bounds of moral health.
Till experience's bitter canker shows how little it is worth
And that still "the meek" inherit highest blessings of this earth.

So throughout all generations, in the broadening flight of Time
Past and present and the future, merge in upward march sublime
All in one design belonging, and the men of every age
Must advance so that their children have more fruitful heritage.

They who in their greedy blindness, all in wild debauch consume,
"After us may come the deluge"—they will share their children's doom.
God will curse their selfish swinelust;—wallowing in their own disgrace,
They shall as decadent peoples, yield empire to nobler race.

* * * * *

NATURE knows of no atonement;—when the forest monarch falls,
No regret or vain repentance its grand majesty recalls.
As a temple built through ages, going up in flame and smoke,
Centuries may pass repairing one short hour's relentless stroke.

Through long geologic aeons, while the warp of Chaos rolled
To be seamed through and enwoven with the sunlight's threads of gold,
Slowly thus the earth was forming, as by some diviner plan
Growing up through countless ages for the future home of man.

Molten in the sun's vast furnace—thrown off as in heated rage
Fire and water fiercely fighting, wrote its history page on page
In the lapping leaves of strata,—till omnipotent command
Bade the waters flow together, leaving dry the solid land.

Up sprang stalk, leaf, bud, and flower, weaving nature's carpet green
Beauty for its own enjoyment, by no living eyes then seen.
Till life came in lowest creatures, in the reptiles of the slime
And in wild fright-striking monsters, griffins, gorgons of the prime.

On each form of life maturing, as the fruit that falls when ripe
Passing in the grand procession, yielding place to higher type.
Till in godlike face and feature, Nature reached her final goal
And at last to crown Creation, Man became a living soul.

Here he found his habitation, built from its foundation stone
By old kindly Mother Nature, furnished as for him alone.
And her last work crowned the building, with the forest arch and dome
His protection from rude heavens, and the roof of his first home.

Then though harsher climate taught him, closer covering to build
And his hut grew into palace as his hand grew deft and skilled,
In his highest stage of progress, yet the forest still remains
In a larger sense, protection for his fields and fertile plains.

Life must have its breathing organs—so are forests to the earth
When lost their fresh inspiration, then is left but arid dearth.
More the piled-up towering city needs its grove and breathing park
Lest the pestilence or plague spot touch its life with fatal mark.

Mountain forests feed the rivers,—those life currents of a land
So they flow in even measure, held back by restraining hand
But when this safe-guard is loosened, then the floodgates open wide
And the land is merged and floodswept, by resistless torrent tide.

As the land is—so the man is! Never yet great nation placed
Arch and roadway of its progress, through a treeless, desert waste
Ever rose the towering city in well-watered fertile clime.
Babylon by flowing waters—all that line the stream of Time.

And the people who unmindful, have deforested their hills
Have sunk down in lazy torpor, that a stagnant blood instills.
On strict Clio's picture tablet there are shown in living proof
Spain and China—all the nations who have burned their mansion's roof.

Thence full loud comes voice of warning. "If ye still will pay no heed
Place no bar to the destroyer, nor will curb the hand of greed,
In the not far distant future, shadowed by the same dark Fate,
There behold your homes and country left unto you desolate!"

* * * * *

PERADVENTURE some old graybeard, who had left in youthful prime
Seeking wider fields and fortune in the golden sunset clime
With fond memories returning, drawn by clasp of buried hand
Comes to visit scenes of childhood, and its fairy Morningland.

With full heart and hope expectant, youth's bright pleasure here to find
Roaming thru green fields and woodlands, paths by recollection lined.
Hale the playmates of his boyhood, with old age's cheery mirth
And renew the ties of kinship, round the genial blazing hearth.

But a keen surprise confronts him. All is altered, wild and strange
Stands he with his sight bewildered—cannot realize the change
"Can this be the Happy Valley—where his childhood's day was born
With the mantle of its beauty—now so ragged, patched and torn?"

Gone—the forest of the uplands, gone green vesture of the hills
Gone—the carpet of the meadows,—gone the sparkle of the rills
Gone—the landscape's rolling outlines into ridges, jagged, sharp.
Gone—the purple veil of mountains, leaving barren sandy scarp.

Gone—the happy homes and firesides, the deserted houses stare
Thru their empty eyeless windows, over yards and gardens bare.
Seem the land's once smiling features, as a human face stiff drawn
In a deathmask cold and rigid, when the lamp of life is gone.

Gone—the friends of youth and playmates, who should have remembered him,
Gone—and scarcely one recalling name in recollection dim,
Gone—all save the withered landmarks. "Can this be my boyhood's home,
With this sad and chilling greeting? Would God I had never come!

There the graves of his forefathers—wild and marked by cold neglect.
With their touch of wan decadence, chilled affection's retrospect.
For the shining plates of memory, will grow dim with grime and rust,
And along with fallen headstones, crumble into ashen dust.

And the mound where she was sleeping, who his youth's love-dream instilled,
She, whose early loss left yearning of a long life unfulfilled.
Could he there relive the picture, see her sad, sweet, wistful face
Framed by rugged, rough entourage of this wild neglected place?

Some fond touch of life and Springtime, must adorn a loved one's tomb,
So by kindly hand there nurtured roses of remembrance bloom.
But o'er cold and lifeless deathclods, those dry bitter tears that start,
As the waters of chill Lethe, drown the memories of the heart.

Sorrow's images are haloed in Time's softer-lined relief.
And are held in fond endearment—as the luxury of grief.
Yet as rainbow-tinted picture on the bubbles' crystal sphere
By a rough touch they are broken—vanish in an acrid tear.

Naught was left that pride engenders, or the love of fatherland,
All its glories and traditions, as tho written in the sand,
Washed away and now forgotten, aye his heart tho strong and brave
Failed and sank at sickening glamour of his country's barren grave.

As a mirage of the desert, youth's illusion disappears,
Dashes he from saddened eyesight, memories and misty tears.
Argosies of hope there stranded, turns he as from closing door
"Good-night to my native country, hither I shall come no more!"

* * * * *

AS a monument of folly, now the unhappy valley stands.
Grim, the bleak and barren mountains look down on the sterile sands.
Once a garden fresh,—encircled by the hill-crest's flowering wreath,
Now by storm and ruin flood swept, into bare and blasted heath.

Hushed the sounds of mirth and music, where the Nymphs and Dryads sang,
And the bowry groves of Daphne with the merry welkin rang
Comes now no reverberation of the joys and pleasures fled.
Only chill and spectral echoes, as from hollows of the dead.

Burden of a sad voice singing of remembered happier years
When the weary eyes look backward, thru the glimmering mist of tears
On some cherished youthful picture, that across Time's distance gleams
As fond-loved and long-lost faces flit thru reminiscent dreams.

As the devotee of pleasure, who hath sold her charms for gold,
By her youth and friends forsaken, stands now withered, wrinkled, old.
And no child with hope of future lights the fire on her chill hearth
And her age's closing winter ne'er will ope in Springtime birth,—

No hope of rejuvenescence, nor to wake from deathlike trance.
Low its waning beams the sunset o'er the dark'ning valley slants,
And the mists of evening thicken, and the smoky blear Twilight
Grows in gloom,—a desert mantling neath the pall of starless night.

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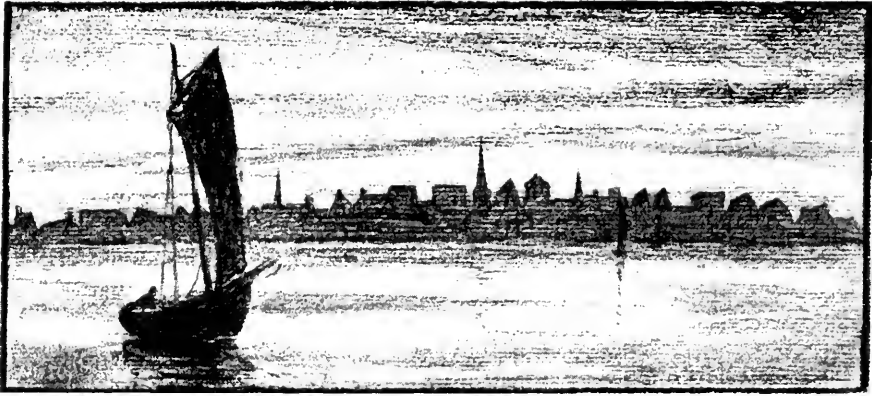
E'EN the ruthless hand of battle and the rough rude tramp of Mars
May slash o'er the face of Nature, with deep cicatrice and scars,
Yet with kindly hand repairing, soon her verdure overgrows
And the red blood of that carnage rises in the blooming rose.

“But more tragic that destruction, which makes Earth a sterile clod
With no freshening life or spirit to reflect the smile of God.
Burned to ashen desolation, as the sin-scorched souls of men
And like them, for its redemption—that land must be “born again.”

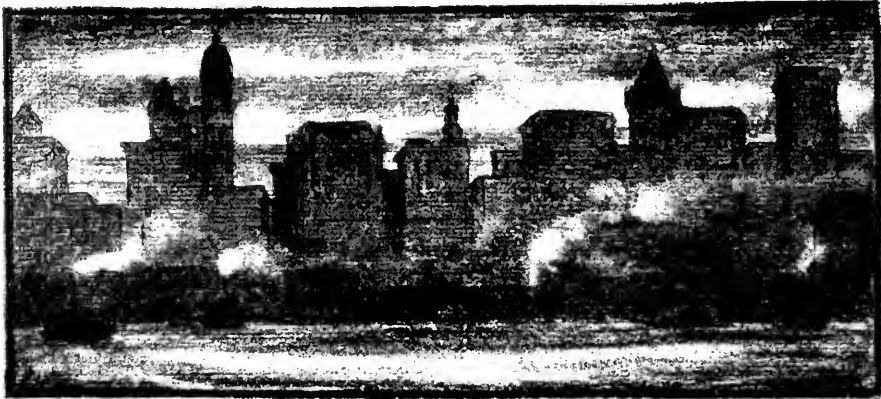
“Sad, the change and reminiscence, bring to mind the bitter truth.
This fair valley should have sported fountain of eternal youth.
But as Sampson's vice and folly, when from him his strength was torn
Beauty and youth's charm departed, when its crest and crown were shorn.

“Aye—the curse comes never causeless. “they who Nature disregard
Bitter ashes of repentance shall receive as their reward.
They who ruined their sweet valley were laid neath her empire's ban
They have sown and reaped their harvest.” This the curse of Mighty Pan.





And within a living memory—thru the mist of by-gone days
Strangely beautiful its skyline rose above wide watery maze
Sharp the gabled peaks piled upward 'gainst horizon of the West
And a church spire towering o'er them—held a cross on topmost crest.



But time brought a new alignment—high aloft rose Mammon's towers
Like those piled up by the Titans to o'erthrow Celestial Powers
Till the golden cross—Christ's emblem—overtopped by their sheer height
In their darker shadows hidden is submerged and lost to sight.

Christ on Wall Street

FAR beyond Herculean pillars, wherein western ocean surged,
E'en more distant than where fabled Lost Atlantis was submerged,
Lay a continent, far reaching—yet to classic world unknown,
Tho the same daygod and night-stars o'er its wilds and forests shone.

History wrote there no annals, while the European world
By the clash of Cross and Crescent, in fierce conflict had been hurled.
When came fall of Eastern Empire, Faith looked westward for a home
Where the Cross of Christ transplanting, it should rear new Christendom.

One among the new world seekers, sailing out into the West,
Found Manhattan's low-fringed island, halted his exploring quest.
Here a quaint, rude fishing village, grew and flourished year by year
Till it stood the Golden Gateway of the Western Hemisphere.

And within a living memory—thru the mist of bygone days
Strangely beautiful its skyline, stood above wide, watery maze.
Sharp the gabled peaks piled upward, 'gainst horizon of the west,
And a church spire towering o'er them, held a cross on topmost crest.

Shining forth in sunlight splendor, clearly there it could proclaim
That Religion and its virtues, were this nation's highest aim,
That Christ's holy faith and teaching formed the creed of this new land,
And no worship of false idols, in its higher light could stand.

But time brought a new alignment, high aloft rose Mammon's towers.
Like those piled up by the Titans, to o'erthrow Celestial Powers.
Till the golden cross, Christ's emblem, overtopped by their sheer height,
In their darker shadows hidden, is submerged and lost to sight.

These as monuments speak truly, how on life's horizon lined,
Newer gods have taken possession, of this people's heart and mind.
Faith our fathers held—forgotten,—and the teaching of our Christ
Unto selfish greed subverted,—all to Mammon sacrificed.

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From the water front ascending, up thru Wall Street's thronging crowds,
Thru the range of lofty buildings, roofed and corniced by the clouds,
Closed away the light of heaven, overhangs impending dread,
As a mountain canon seeming with dark precipice o'erhead.

Once again before the Minster, now in deeper shadow drowned,
Stifled in from air and sunlight by the looming towers around.
While the great bell tolled the noontide in its numbers full and loud,
But its Angelus unheeded flew above the bristling crowd.

Therein on the painted window, stood manhood's divinest form,
Incarnation of the Godlike, in life-color growing warm.
From His temple's lofty chancel looking down that busy mart,
Christ Himself with clearest vision, searching in a nation's heart.

What was there outspread before Him? What meant all this bustling strife?
Was this swarming hive incited by the nobler aims of life?
Was this seething world-brain scheming some new better path to find
To the lands of joy and gladness, wherein should be led mankind?

Were the giants of this people gathered in this central place,
Stoutest hearts filled with devotion to advance the human race,
Greatest minds with souls as noble striving for a people's good,
Filling up the horn of plenty for sad Labor's hungry blood?

Or strove here the fine ambition to write high a noble name
That the world should read with reverence on the temple front of Fame?
Nay! indeed! Far other motive that fierce concourse underlaid,
And their highest rule of action was the greedy law of trade—

Getting most for what is given, by deceitful lie or stealth
Over-reaching weaker brethren to attain ill-gotten wealth.
Each man blowing golden bubbles, with their brilliance to entice
And ensnare the greedy glances of the eyes of Avarice.

Here the trader flaunts his promise, and with luring bait he lies
As the subtle spider weaving meshes for unwary flies.
Plundering the hands of Labor of the first-fruits of their toil,
Taking by the law of strongest, as the tyrant takes his spoil.

Here the vultures flock together, and the strong prey on the weak;
Here the golden feast is given to the sharpest claw and beak;
The survival of the keenest,—law of hungry brutal rage
Is the same law here that governs highest point of Christian age.

As the crush at coarsest swine-trough; each one grabbing all for self
Trampling down the weaker brother, in the fierce wild rush for pelf.
Life and all its finer purpose, tuned to one low grovelling note,
That intones its greedy gospel from loud Mammon's brazen throat.

Is this what Christ should have taught us—this the golden rule and plan—
Let him who would be the greatest—do most for his fellowman.
Christ, who gave men their best treasures with the hopes that life illume,
Took for pay a homeless living and a criminal's death doom.

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In this nation's center, is this noblest scene it can afford
To the clear inerrant vision of the Christ it calls its Lord?
What the boast of His religion? What are names and symbols worth?
“When the Son of Man returneth shall he find Faith on the earth?”

Yea, a Faith in God, in Justice, love for all the true and good,
Faith that trusts in one great Father, makes all men one brotherhood;
Faith that finds a nobler mission than to pamper pride and greed,
Faith that helps the weaker brother, Faith that follows Christ indeed;

Faith that teaches self-denial—virtue of heroic cast—
For the world has need of heroes more than in the savage Past.
Aye—if ever was an era—when the age called loud and clear
For a grand heroic leader,—surely it is now and here.

Not the Romaunt's mail-clad champion, righting wrongs with iron hand,
But the stronger moral hero who against Time's drift can stand
Firmly, breasting that fierce current—Mammon o'er the world has rolled,
Gulfing every nobler passion in the one wild rush for gold.

He, who can cast down the Demon—that now rules with golden rod
Seated high above this people—on the very throne of God.
Teaching his foul devil gospel—with its shameless, Godless creed
And no faith or inspiration, higher than its swinish greed.

Honesty and Truth subverting—aye put money in thy purse
This alone is worth the gaining—poverty's the only curse.
God is good unto the greedy—take all in the loaded plate—
I am not my brother's keeper—leave the hindmost to his fate.

Satiate your soul with pleasure, have all that this world can give;
There is naught beyond the senses—live with but one life to live."
This is their one Faith, their Gospel—this the great divine command
To the minds that from this center rule and govern all this land.

Is it strange that sorrow's shadow mantles o'er his godlike face,
That the brow of Christ should darken as he looks upon this place?
For these men are yet called Christians. Ah! the blasphemy and shame
That a den of thieves and robbers should be shielded 'neath His name!

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Aye! beneath the varnished surface and society's veneer
Of legality and custom what foul wrongs and crimes appear—
Shapes of men sleeked o'er with polish, coming smug upon the mart
To purloin the wealth from others with a devil's wily art;

And hypocrisy's smooth music, charming victims in their toils;
Then, alike the crawling serpent, strangling them in slimy coils.
Or, as tigers and hyenas struggling fierce with clutching hold
On each other's throats and heart chords to wring out the life-blood gold,

Call this commerce! nay, 'tis warfare, and the wretchedest of wars,
This of stealth and plunder wherein Mammon takes the place of Mars.
Fiends of the midnight murder have no colder, blacker blood
Than these men who drown their brethren in dark ruin's gulphing flood.

In their central den of Bedlam, like wild beasts within their cage,
Men changed into frenzied demons fill the air with howling rage,
Selfish, black, malignant passion leering in each hungry face,
Blasphemies of God and Justice fume sulphureous through the place.

E'en the sunlight that out yonder smiles over fields and forests green
Dim and dismal grows in falling 'twixt the walls that shade this scene,
Aye—a lurid Pandemonium seemed this vision—strange to tell,
Christ stood with his holy temple here hard by the gates of Hell.

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In those sacred walls pervaded by a dim religious awe
May be read and heard Christ's message—and that one divinest law
Wherein for man's rule and guidance, all commandments he combined
Love to God, supreme All Father—brotherhood to all mankind.

"Blessed be the poor and blessed they for truth who suffer wrong,
Blessed be the meek and humble, unto them shall earth belong,
Blest, the pure in heart and spirit, who give guile and greed no place
Nor the world's vain crooked wisdom, they shall see God face to face."

Echoes of Christ's voice and blessings, from that mountain summit come
Down the ages and the arches of Time's great cathedral dome:
With the fearful maledictions, his sure justice shall award
Upon those who scorn his precepts—and his teachings disregard.

"Cursed the tyrant and oppressor, cursed the sons of lust and pride,
Cursed be they who strive for power o'er their fellow men to ride,
Cursed be the money-seekers, who their souls to Mammon sell,
They indeed shall find their Kingdom—but that Kingdom is of Hell."

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On the street the sea of faces surges,—strange and motley crew,
Everywhere the pinched-up feature, hungry eyes of Wandering Jew,
Him who bade the Christ to move on, lest he for a moment stop
With sad Calvary's death procession that small business of his shop.

Vain the appeal of human suffering, or of godlike sacrifice
To a soul and vision blinded by the dreams of avarice,
Mean and narrowed eye-sight fastened down by grovelling greed and lust,
Heaven or earth shows it naught nobler than a heap of golden dust.

Aye, the type is still undying. Down the ages he appears
With his wrinkled, hungry visage sharpened by the rolling years.
Where'er Mammon builds his temple in the crowded market place
There comes Priest Ahasuerus with hooked beak and bearded face.

All the human changed to vulture, for the harpy's prey in wait,
Living on the bones of dead men with a greed no gorge can sate.
Yet with doom of unrest driven, as old Tantalus accursed
Reaching still for that which ever yet eludes his craving thirst.

Stricken by the curse, Christ's anguish lay upon his craven soul,
Words in fiery traces written on its parched and wrinkled scroll:
Branded thus, he should live tortured by remorse's serpent fangs
And that Death, tho prayed for, never bring relief unto his pangs.

"Thou and like thee yet shall move on driven by a deathless doom
Down the world's dark, dreary ages—through its night of haunted gloom,
Till the dawn of that glad morning when unto mine heritage,
I return with light and glory to illumine its golden age."

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Dark and solemn looms the question. All these structures vast and grand
Rising to such height and splendor, are they built on solid land
Of God's sure eternal justice with its stern, unchanging laws?
If not, then beneath them surely wait the earthquake's yawning jaws.

Wrongs, outrages, and injustice, do they 'neath these temples lurk;
Do the toiling hands that rear them reap the fruit of their own work?
Riches earned by burdened millions, by what rule of justice brought
Here to feed luxurious idlers, for whose work the world owes naught.

"Thou shalt eat thy bread by labor; yea, by toil of thine own hand."
From the closing gates in Eden, God himself spake this command.
His strong justice yet remaineth, and his judgments fall at last
On the tyrants and oppressors who reap where they have not cast.

Ye that rob the toil of others, though ye flourish for a time,
Yet clear in the Book of Doomsday is recorded every crime;
There the dark account will gather usury down through the years,
And the payment check be written with your children's blood and tears.

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Once again His brow Immortal seemed with holy passion moved
As He wept o'er that fair city—the Jerusalem He loved—
When His heart was sorely wounded that the love which in it yearned
For mankind and for his people was by them derided, spurned.

When they turned not at His pleading, but to pride and self held fast,
And to that old road of ruin leading downward in the past;
When he saw with prophet's vision gathering doom of coming years
His sublime and godlike pity overflowed in human tears.

From that hill whereon He rested, gazing on the city walls,
Through the centuries and silence still His voice of sorrow calls:
"O Jerusalem, how often would I have thy children brought
'Neath the brooding wings of parent, but in vain, for ye would not;

Ye have slain the hearts that loved you, ye have chosen your own fate;
Now the time nears when your houses shall be left you desolate;
Toppling to their own destruction, these proud temples ye have built
Shall be crushed beneath their burden of oppression, crime, and guilt.

Not one stone left on another. Then in ashen gloom o'ercast
Shall the noonday sun be darkened by the deep volcano blast.
In the mountain's secret places, in the desert's lonely path,
Ye shall vainly seek to hide you from that judgment day of wrath.

Aye—your sins call down this vengeance—and that day shall bring to mind,
All the crimes and rank injustice, unto which ye now are blind
But no prayers and no repentance, then can stay the hand of Fate,
Death above your desolation—echoing "Too late—Too late!"

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Thou—who drovest the money changers from Thy sacred temple door,
Would that Thou with Power Almighty couldst return to earth once more.
That the same old flock of vampires—should be driven forth and scourged,
And the Temple of this nation from its foul corruptions purged.

For that same doom shall await us—as of Zion was foretold.
Christ departing—they returning—plied unholy trade of old
With the Powers and Priests connivance—and in mockery perchance
On dark Calvary's crucifixion looked they with a sneering glance.

Never fearing His returning—they were gladly rid of Him
But Christ reappeared in judgment and with vengeance dire and grim.
When Rome's legions rolling o'er them as a whelming fiery flood
Left there only pile of ashes—where the walls of Zion stood.

Christ at The Carnival

NIGHT had stolen Daylight's splendor to illumine the masker's hall,
Fashion, pride, and wealth there gathered for the closing Carnival.
There came masque and mime and pageant—all that art to sense affords,
Golden warp of light was woven through with music's roseate chords.

Full-blown flowers—the charms of women 'round that circle ope'd to light
Flesh and blood with passion glowing, shrank not from obtrusive sight.
All to sense was consecrated; pulse with hot blood throbbing rife,
Higher intellect submerging in the warm instinct of life,

Strange! Could Nature, thrust out rudely from the wide door, come again
In the lofty temple window midst the highest caste of men?
Has tradition of long ages, from the far halls of the East
Handed down this celebration of Astarte's sensual feast?

Nay! they tell us that the church-plays of the medieval age
Have the carnival begotten and the modern dramas' page.
But no longer a Madonna forms its central light and soul,
Virgin-mother of a Christ-child crowned with love's pure aureole;

Highest spiritual ideal, by which Art and Music strove
To regenerate human passion, to ennoble human love.
So with sweet angelic beauty, they her image would entwine
Thus to raise the sensual instinct into sentiment divine.

But with luxury returnant—old lust worship starts afresh;
Virgin gives place to Astarte, Spirit yielding unto flesh;
Vaunted Light of modern era focused to this central aim
To illumine sensuous beauty—to enkindle passion's flame.

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Art arranged its living pictures. Fairest sea-hall in the earth,
Crystal-sparkling, blazed with diamonds, waited Aphrodite's birth.
In the rose-dawn from the sea-foam, she should rise with Nature's own
Garment of the gauzy rose-mist 'round her unveiled beauty thrown.

Every eager eye was centered, keenly fastened on the scene,
Every hungry heart was waiting for its feast on beauty's queen;
All were stilled in hush expectant for this climax of the night,
But a strange, unearthly vision dawned on their bewildered sight:

With a sharp and startling discord rose a cross bestained with blood,
And beside it, in life's image, Christ of Nazareth there stood,
Clad in that same robe of purple that was rent on Calvary,
And his weary sandals covered with the dust of Galilee;

Pensive brow with pain was pallid, and His silent, wistful stare,
Freighted with world-weight of sorrow, held at pause the startled air;
Looked He as some godlike hero, who had died his land to save,
Comes in spirit to His people—finds them dancing o'er His grave.

Why this sudden sharp intrusion? This is not Religion's place.
Yea! this is your fondest worship—highest temple of your race.
Here ye bring your hearts and treasures, in full lavish sacrifice,
To your gods of lust and pleasure—aye! unto the demon, vice.

Ye have wrongly turned the abundance God hath given for all mankind
To this altar where lewd Belial keeps his brazen priestess shrined.
Well ye know ye who here lavish ill-gained gold to feed your lust,
Thousands of your brethren languish, hungry with their ashen crust.

E'en in shadow of this temple, 'neath the blaze its splendors flaunt,
In the cavern gloom thereunder stalk the specters of grim Want.
Crouching by its darkened hearthstone, poverty with hands bechilled
Dreads the next morn's hunger, knowing naught wherewith it may be filled.

Then dreams of the treasures squandered this luxurious vice to feed,
And to fill the costly cravings Nature and indulgence breed
In the debauchee and idler, to whose riot waste are thrown
The abundance and the harvests their own hands have never sown;

Wealth wrung from the toiling myriads and brought here this stage to rear
Where your pride may strut a moment through its golden atmosphere,
But behind the silken curtains that around this drama fall
Stand the furies with their firebrands waiting Nemesis' dread call,

And doom lurks in no far distance. Look around you—pause and think
How your glittering hall is toppling on the steep volcano brink;
In the murky clouds beneath you hear the seething vapors hiss,
See the red-hot cone emerging o'er gloom-mantled city Dis!

There are hordes of Want and Labor forging in the fires of hate
Instruments of ghastly terror that the hours of vengeance wait.
Look down in the smoldering furnace; then dance on in heedless trust,
But between you and that fire-lake stretches thin, deceptive crust.

Laugh on! After us the deluge. Others danced till Doom came by,
And the death shriek of their ruin shrills down through the century.
Aye! the mills of God grind slowly; yet they grind unheard—unseen,
And long ages of their grinding ground the gory guillotine.

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On the dim shore of the deluge loomed up Babel's haughty tower,
Where the proud perched on its summit mocked at th' Almighty power;
O'er the common herd high lifted, safe secure in lofty place,
They should smile at storm and deluge sweeping off the human race.

But God sent confusion on them—in their hearts, and hopes estranged
From those they owned not as brethren, life and thought and language changed,
Comprehending not each other, with no bond of love or trust,
Soon the structure they had builded fell and crumbled into dust;

Scattered by Almighty fiat, down upon earth's lowly breast,
Stripped of pride, they took their places on a level with the rest.
Yet, unmindful of the warning, every era, every race,
Builds its Babel; flies its flaunting pride in the Almighty's face.

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Since the giant powers of Nature under man's control have passed,
Social fabric, life, law, custom are in modern mold recast,
And the world by steam and lightning in one vast machine is made
Engineering of steel and iron linking all its marts of trade,

While its bands of myriad workers harnessed to the iron trace
By the whip of hunger driven forward in the fiercest race,
And the old fire of ambition urges on with keenest goad,
Stretching human nerve and sinew to the limit of their load.

Grinding out the golden treasures for some idle, spendthrift waste,
Riches, luxuries, and comforts that the workers never taste.
E'en as Egypt's fierce taskmaster drove with domineering will
Men like manikins of iron tramping on the stern tread-mill.

Now again the fierce slave-driver comes with heavy iron hand,
Lording o'er the thousand menials, forced to cringe 'neath his command.
As Rome's tyrant, feudal baron, Mammon's soulless chivalry,
Loom gigantic on th' horizon of the twentieth century,

And the vain conceit yet fills them, that with power of sword and state
They may thrall the slaving myriads in the bonds of fear and hate.
But the crushed and trampled spirit will at last rise up in man,
And society will never hold together on this plan;

Comes the day when hand of labor at the dead line drops its chain,
Grasps the sword, turns on its driver striking home with might and main,
Then come blood and fire and terror, a world frightened stands aghast,
While its bulwarks, towers, and splendors are swept down 'neath whirlwind blast

This a people's righteous fury. But upon whose head should rest
Blame and ban for blood and ruin, on oppressor or oppressed?
On him who Christ's law had broken, who denied men's brotherhood,
And above them trod as tyrant—on him be the curse of blood.

Ye who force this fateful conflict, ye whose wealth shall hire the swords
To beat down the starving myriads, to defend your stolen hoards.
Let your worldly wisdom ponder—ere the fatal die is cast
Think, what destiny awaits you,—search the annals of the Past.

What though Victory should wait on you, and ye shall in triumph walk
In procession close behind you, Cæsar and his headsmen stalk,
And that dreaded "man on horseback" tramples in one common grave,
Pride and pauper, prince and peasant, levels master with his slave.

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Comes the picture of that banquet which set Babylon ablaze,
When its bad King, proud Belshazzar, filled with wine and wanton craze,
Gathered all his minions round him in his brilliant palace hall.
Sharp! his drunken dream was startled by the writing on the wall:

Yet his preachers salved his conscience with their words of honeyed oil,
For the rich must have their banquets, though a people groan with toil.
Sleek soothsayers filled with flattery to the King their incense brought
All his world yet moved on smoothly and the writing they read not.

But a Daniel stood before him, sternest he of prophets old,
Read the message God had written and an empire's doom foretold;
"Thou are judged and art found wanting." In that night a bloody hand
Over Babylon's proud city reached the conqueror's flaming brand;

Down the ages through the willows sighing o'er its lonely tomb
Sounds the warning voice of Daniel—"Babel's sins bring Babel's doom."
And the solemn voice prophetic—tho we list not to its call
Now is reading to this nation—the handwriting on the wall.

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Why should Babylon's wan specter wreathed in harlotry and crime
Yet affright a people standing in the foremost ranks of Time?
Here no tyrant wields his scepter, freedom holds the sword of right,
Progress leads enthusiast armies upward to the realms of light.

High the cross of Christ stands shining over steeple, spire, and dome,
With the glow of his religion lighting every hearth and home.
Ah! was ever taunt so bitter, ever boast so false and blind,
In the name of Christ and Freedom what foul idols are enshrined?

On the highest dome sits Mammon, on its golden cross astride,
Showering down his dust and lacker o'er a world's vice, sin, and pride;
E'en the inmost sanctuary with hypocrisy is cursed
By the sybarites whose gospel holds Christ's golden rule reversed.

Freedom! when a hundred tyrants all this land in bondage hold,
Reap its harvests for their banquets; outvie Babylon of old.
Never yet the world has witnessed towers of overweening wealth
Like these o'er this plundered people, built by unseen hands of stealth;

But from robbed and hungry myriads comes the murmur of unrest
As low muttering of the storm-cloud gathering in the darkened west;
Soon the wolves that tore the vitals from the proud empires of yore
From their dens of hunger trooping will be prowling 'round the door.

History, like fiery beacon, points its searchlight o'er the way
Where old nations marched on bravely down to ruin and decay,
Of their destiny unconscious, like the path the proverb saith
That seems right unto a people, yet the end thereof is death.

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As the beast and reptile kingdoms write their histories in earth's crust
So men's empires leave their records in the layers of grime and dust
Since the day when tyrant Pharaoh followed his retreating slaves;
Laid his army, pride, and chariots 'neath the Red Sea's vengeful waves.

All along Time's ruined highway crumbling broken arches stand
Where wrecks of a once-proud people stare o'er their deserted land.
With a strange bewildered vision, peering through the twilight gloom,
Shrunk phantoms of past grandeur, stalking 'round a broken tomb,

Wondering how their sun of glory set without the hope of dawn,
And the saving health of nations had forever been withdrawn.
From wan windows of decadence peering through Times' smoky haze,
Can they see the chill that blighted glory of their former days?

Know the oft-repeated story, how their kings betrayed God's trust,
Smoothed the paths of pride and riches, ground the poor into the dust,
Made a mockery of justice, traitors to God's truth and right,
They alike crime-driven Judas blindly groped down into night.

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Must Fate still repeat the story, time bring nations from her womb
Who the same old road shall travel from the cradle to the tomb?
From free, happy childhood, onward through the battles men must wage
To the peace at last that settles in the tyranny of age?

Must the temple of a nation, builded slowly stone by stone,
Crush out freedom in its people, grow into a despot's throne?
Shall this grandest of republics, freedom's loudest vaunted home,
Follow on its fated pathway through the history of Rome,

On the road of wealth and splendor, up the mountain's dizzy steep
To the precipice where over lies dark ruin's vasty deep?
Aye, perchance! All that is human marches with resistless tread
Onward o'er the crest of glory to the empire of the dead.

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As a cloudland panorama drifting by a mountain height
Down the valley disappearing in the dark, low sea of Night;
So in fate-impelled procession, pageants, peoples pass along,
Battles, triumphs, splendors, shadows crowd each other in the throng.

Rank on rank as phantom legions marching through the realms of sleep,
Gaze askance with eyes averted, yet all silent on they sweep
Out of shadow into shadow looming forms in darkness fade,
Heroes, kings, imperial grandeurs—all a moving masquerade.

History is but a pageant.—On the walls of Time are shown
Vanities of man's ambition—for the grave lurks near the throne.
Dreams of empire—fading sunsets—as that on his island's steep
Sad Napoleon, captive-gazing, o'er the marge of darkening deep.

He, whose meteoric fire-track seemed to cleave the heaven's arch,
Soon it faded—left no traces on the constellation's march.
Grander tragedies torch-lumined by the blood red Northern Light,
Now are trailing on before us—in this cycle's closing night.

Twilight of old gods and Titans, onward moving to their doom.
While the lightning's coruscations, their dusk cloudland march illumine.
Underneath the fire tornado, with its flaming, scorching breath
Sweeps down nations with their temples,—one red carnival of Death.

Fierce, gigantic, fiendish revel,—gorgons and chimeras dire
Monster man-devouring engines, belching forth volcanic fire
Join in carnival of carnage—making earth a yawning tomb,
Then pass on in masked procession—to the Inferno's cavern gloom.

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On the last night of the revel—and its wild, delirious thrill
Comes the cold gray dusk of morning with its silent ashen chill.
So world carnival,—when over—on low shores of Lethe's stream
What remain of life and glory? Dust and a forgotten dream.

Yet above the wreck and ruin—and the weltering chaos dark,
High aloft Christ still is standing—Earth's Eternal Shining mark.
As said grand old Barbarossa—with his life's hope blasted, gone,
“Woe is me, my son hath perished! But Christ lives! Men, let us on!”



Christus Liberator

The sublime sentence, spoken by Christ, implying that institutions, ordinances, and governments are made for man,—for his progress—enlightenment and improvement; and that man was not made merely to form parts of the machinery of states—principalities and empires—stands forth as the great argument of liberalism against authority and repressive tyranny.

I

With strange silent eyes, far gazing thru world's morning Twilight dim,
Stands the Sphynx, against horizon of the desert's roselit rim.
Time's great highway therefrom starting, peoples, nations onward throng
And the Sphynx' dark challenge fronts them ever as they march along.

Which hold ye to stand the higher;—Man, the one immortal-souled
Or the State that molds by millions, men in one great empire's hold?
Freedom, conscience, faith and progress, in this issue all are bound,
"Man against the State," and here lay history's greatest battle-ground.

For man's spirit ever-growing—in new fields would fain expand,
But Authority e'er jealous, holds it down with iron hand.
As the Flesh holds down the Spirit, lest its nobler powers awake
And its Liberty asserting—should the tyrant shackles break.

II

Empire-founding builds up Kinghood, on the towers of fear and force
Crushing Liberty and Manhood, in remorseless blood-stained course,
Till the spirit of resistance rises in the trampled horde
And red revolution's riot makes appeal to fire and sword.

Then from Anarch unto Despot slow the pendulum will swing
Freedom run to license ever, will the Man on Horseback bring
And the lust for glory, conquest with the trader's greed for gain
To Autocracy all pander, helping forge the tyrant's chain.

So this conflict of the Ages, yet is raging,—in the lists
Liberty and Empire-building shock as fierce antagonists.
And in spite of boasted progress, Mammon's soulless minions hold,
Now o'er men more dire oppression, than the Tyrant's sword of old.

III

Yet ascendant are the marches sad Humanity hath won
Hoping still to reach the summit, where shall rise millennial sun
When in its dawn light resplendant, Freedom finds a nobler birth
And the Golden Rule prevailing brings God's Kingdom upon earth.

But Christ taught us, this true Kingdom cometh only from above
Must be formed and found within you, and obedience come from love
With no bonds, and no restrictions—of no penalties in awe,
Man's freed spirit should act rightly—and without constraint of law.

So when to the judgment cited. "Man against the State" and found
Breaking that most sacred ordinance that the Jewish race still bound
Christ himself with godlike answer, loosed its mandatory ban
"Man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath made for man."



Christ Returnant

WHEN the Son of Man returneth shall He find faith on the earth?
Shall He find a darkened heaven, quenched the star that told His birth?
Shall He find a ruined vineyard, blasted fruit and withered leaves?
Shall He find His holy temple turned into a den of thieves?

Then no longer Christ the lowly, love shall heat to vengeful ire,
Then shall glow His halo-aureole in a world-consuming fire.
Yea, then changed with righteous anger into Judge—relentless, stern,
From His high cloud-throne of judgment His Light shall to Lightning turn.

So 't is written, but Christ's coming waits no ending, time, or world,
Brings no thunder-voice of judgment from a sky in fire-cloud furled;
Waits no hour on Time's great dial marked by prophet's warning hand,
Nor the trumpet-sounding angel standing over sea and land;

In no paroxysm of nature that the great world's heart benumbs,
Nor in earthquake or in whirlwind—in the still, small voice *He comes*.
Comes He every hour in judgment, with the blessing or the ban,
Of a nobler, higher kingdom set up in the soul of man.

Aye—His Kingdom is within you! There His judgment bar shall stand.
There the voice of God and Conscience, speak forth stern and strict command.
He who heeds not its clear warning—then pronounces his own doom.
Sin in self-elimination—in its own fires shall consume.

Yet not this—Christ's grander mission,—sitting on the judgment seat
There the sentences of justice on the derelict to mete.
But a nobler ministration not of punishment or force
But by law of love and kindness—leading up the shining course.

His Humanity's broad spirit—still is leavening the race
And thru rage of war and conflict—yet endures its saving grace.
Brighter yet His star shall shine forth o'er the waste and weltering flood
As his buried Cross arising—o'er Rome's Pagan Empire stood.

When that Cross became triumphant, then thereunder were enlined
Pride and selfish Powers of evil, using it as cloak and blind
For their deeds of blood and outrage—reddening it with deepest shame
As the Lords of Hell were shielding, all their crimes beneath His name.

But in this dark age enduring, as in wild and stormy night,
Ever thru the breaking cloudlines—would shine forth His clearer light.
So at times the seer and prophet, guided on his lonely path
Rose to stem the tide of evil—and proclaim Christ's purer faith.

* * * * *

Christ e'er lines with truths of Nature—long his deeper thoughts concealed,
By the light of modern Science, have more fully been revealed.
And at times not in the churches—circled with their iron rail
His free spirit oft appearing, more in those outside its pale.

Groping yet in oldtime error, twenty centuries scarce sufficed
Forth to bring in their true meaning—plainest teachings of our Christ
For the church usurped by Pagans—their old chanting still intones
And for preaching Christ the Living—rattling relics and dry bones.

Not in rigid form and dogma—that once made, forever stands.
Christ proclaimed that his own Kingdom, as a growing plant expands
Into broader life e'er changing—as the smallest mustard seed.
Thus it stands with Evolution,—holds the same uplifting creed.

Growing onward to Perfection—this the doctrine by Him preached
Ever seeking the Ideal—tho it never may be reached.
This Humanity's condition—weighted by its fleshly bond
It must ever place Perfection—in the spirit world beyond.

Coarser life to earth returning unto higher life gives room
Grander men and nobler nations—yet rise o'er the dead world's tomb.
Wisdom comes with long experience and the Empire of the Past
Rules the Present with its memories—gives the Future hopeful cast,

That it rise above old errors—and to nobler forms give place
Marching on in Evolution—to the perfect man and race
This our vision now inspiring,—Faith and Science here unite,
In the hope of man's perfection—final triumph of the right.

So the Light of Truth and Freedom—streaming down from age to age
Thru the maze of History brighter—grows with each succeeding page.
Thus indeed the Christ Ideal—with the mind of man expands,
And now in the living present—He its highest Teacher stands.

Tho Religion change her garment—and outgrow the garb of youth,
Yet His words are not the clothing—but the very soul of truth
Verbum manet in aeternum, true for every age and clime
Spirit of God's Truth expanding with the onward march of Time.

Guided by His Light the nations—unto this last bound have come,
From the wilds of beast and savage—to the heights of Christendom.
And tho far from land of promise—yet here on the upward slope
Streaming out from golden gateway—on us shines the light of Hope—

That the glorious city rising—midst the palms of Paradise
Shall not ever be a mirage—hung beyond our clouded skies
But that dream of Heaven, descending,—shall rest on the solid land
And Jerusalem the Golden here on earth itself shall stand.

Then that radiant day of promise—by prophetic seer foretold,
When into a blooming garden, earth's dark wilderness unfold
Tamed—the wild beasts of man's nature—harnessed to the march of mind,
And fierce Moloch—Mars or Mammon—shall no longer rule mankind.

When the storm-rack of dark ages flies upon night's cloudspread wings,
And the star-crowned dawn, as herald, in that glorious morning brings,
Then, as first beams of its splendor, on her shining towers fall,
Memnon-like—the walls of Zion, shall reverb the morning's call.

In that glad millennial radiance, hatred—war and lust shall cease
And beneath her vine and fig tree, Righteousness shall dwell with Peace—
So the Golden Rule prevailing—shall to Golden Age give birth,
Then the Son of Man—His Kingdom—here shall find upon the earth.

Immortality

Life so brief—then be it brilliant. If its carnival be short,
Fill with wassail, wine, and women, let the heart enjoy its sport;
Why should we not dance in sunshine, while life draws its fleeting breath
Moraturi salutamus—one grand *vivat* to King Death.

Trip on glibly to the doomsday; let not care build up her nest
In the heart and hatch her broodlings, crowding joy from out the breast.
But one moment in this waltz-whirl halt, and see those colors warm
Glowing in the silken tissues scarcely hiding beauty's form.

Know that these same colors shooting from sun-aureoled Iris' bow
Were woven in the forest foliage of a million years ago;
Ocean-buried,—lands grew o'er them, continents upon whose crust
Man's ten thousand generations marched and moldered into dust.

Yet these fragile films of color have lived in the darkened mines.
Resurrected in the sunlight as the gorgeous anilines
Blushing 'round their sister diamond in the folds on beauty's breast
As the rosevail pinned by Hesper, o'er the zephyr-breathing West.

If indeed these be eternal, this frail light that clothes the trees
And the raiment of the lilies, is not man far more than these?
Shall his form its fires and forces gather but to be destroyed?
Nay! there's no annihilation, Nature knows no perfect void;

Out of silence life arises, as some grand symphonic strain
Grows up in world-stirring splendors, then fades into dark again,
Yet the vanishing vibrations, lost to ken of eye or ear,
Somewhere in the star-land echoes, lingering will reappear.

And tho Time devours his children—yet their nobler part dies not.
For all worthy of remembrance stands immortal—deed or thought.
In his tapestry enwoven—tho long lost to ken or sight.
In the final grand unfolding—it will clearly come to light.

* * * * *

Tho all flesh be as the grass is, and the flower of the field
Ever withering and fading—they to death and change must yield
Yet the Spirit underlying that this life and beauty warns
Is eternal and unchanging thro out all the changing forms.

This the Word of God creative—Ideal that all nature molds
His Eternal law of Progress—by which universe unfolds
Thought and Will of the Almighty—thread thru this predestined plan
From dark mass of Chaos growing—up to mind and soul of man.

There the world in microcosm—is reflected line on line
And thus formed in God's own image—man partakes of the divine.
In the stream of life still broadening—he becomes a living part
Tho it be but one pulsation of the universe's heart.

Merge your life then in that spirit—moving this concourse along,
Love and earnest work with others—marching in the mighty throng.
Losing self in onward movement—as you follow on the gleam
So your spirit shall live ever—in that grand unceasing stream.

And Death's claim shall not be final. Death is but the gateway arch
Thru which hosts of time are passing, in their onward, upward march.
Tho our ashes pave the roadway—yet our nobler thoughts and faith
Are eternal and move forward in a never-brightening path.

To the fountains of existence, to the shining golden Throne,
When we merge into the splendors of the Radiant Unknown;
In Him we too are immortal; so in nobler strain we sing
Moraturi salutamus! Glory to the deathless King.

Maje Van Courtlandt

MAJE VAN CORTLANDT loved his cousin, with a love so strong and pure,

That tho crossed by disappointment, yet thru life it would endure.
For his was a constant nature,—love once given, was given for all,
And as law of Medes and Persians, it would suffer no recall.

Hearts there are like tender fruitbuds, when their full bloom meets a frost
Then no later hopes will burgeon,—flower and fruitage both are lost.
Yet they may keep green with promise, with more generous foliage lined
Than those using all life's currents—bringing forth their seed and kind.

Thus it seemed with Maje Van Courtlandt, tho the opening leaves were chilled
Yet they folded back on heart-bud—that by frost had not been killed.
It remained sealed up yet living, so his love would never change
Knowing one that filled its ideal—ne'er would seek a lower range.

Highly born and a West Pointer; there the discipline full stern
Taught him to control his spirit,—every wayward course to spurn
Strong, unerring walked he forward—firmly path of duty trod,
True unto himself and faithful to his country,—to his God.

Nor with himself would he palter, so when love denied his prayer
Yet he stood before its altar, to remain forever there.
Worshipping alone that picture—and no face of woman-kind
Could replace his heart's one idol—to all others he was blind.

At this altar consecrated,—he made there a solemn vow
To remain forever faithful—nor to other shrine would bow.
Never changed he for another—to her memory he clove.
World might smile at him as victim of a disappointed love.

But this love and pride of country kept his heart-spring fresh and clear
Thru life's long and torrid summer,—heat nor drought it would not fear.
In his church and state all proudly—he assumed his wonted place,
There his military mantle fitted with peculiar grace.

On Old Trinity's bronze portals—in full all-relief enlind
Scenes historic of his country—his enthusiasm could find
With devotion of Crusader in the Knightly days of yore,
These to him had all the glamour of antique romantic lore.

As the stern old Roman warrior—clad in classic mantle fold
These quaint continental costumes, could the same brave spirits hold.
Patriots and souls heroic—who for country lived and died,
And there seeing his forefathers—filled him with an honest pride.

Not indeed that pride of spirit—that superior rank would claim,
Nor the clinging to past merits—vaunting an ancestral name
But their honesty and manhood—courage and the honors due,
This nobility obliged him—Keep their standard high and true.

Living thus his life all purely—in his ideals he found
Finer food for heart and spirit—than the vulgar world around.
While it looked on him as on those by its coarseness undefiled
With a mild, contemptuous pity—as on simple minded child.

* * * * *

Maud, his cousin was a maiden of the fairest Saxon type.
Golden hair o'er brow of marble,—lips full red and cherry ripe,
Eyes of blue—full, deep and tender, by their soft and melting glance
Lover would be led in humor of a languorous love trance.

Not one strong aggressive feature,—she was all of female grace,
With the innocence of childhood beaming from her sunny face.
Tender hands, so light and shapely—ever seemed in velvet glove,
Yet their clasp with touch magnetic could awake the thrill of love.

Voice of low and gentle accent, as Cordelia unto Lear
Falling in the alto cadence,—music to the listening ear.
No need of the cantilena—finer melody was heard
In the subtle intonations of each clearly spoken word.

Nor did she seem proud or worldly—nor by wealth or fashion spoiled
From her path were coarse temptations, by refined entourage foiled.
Negative, perchance to many, somewhat lacking force and fire,
Yet she, in her manly cousin could the strongest love inspire.

Yet is maiden love uncertain, spurning guide of intellect
Or advice of worldly wisdom—queerest choice it may select.
Often thus a noble woman—who the pedestal should grace
Stooping neath her wonted station—will assume inferior place.

Maud perchance thought Cousin Henry, too severe and strict in form
As to Guinevere was Arthur—lacking fire and color warm.
Then she still was young and wayward; wanting in that coarser sense
Ground in us by costly teaching—of a life experience.

Upon one—and far less worthy—was it Maud's selection fell,
He had that attracted women—what it is we cannot tell.
But to Henry's stronger manhood stood he in keen contrast—
Scarcely worthy, he of mating in the high Van Cortlandt caste.

But this is a wide, free country,—each one his own course can take,
Man disposes—yet will woman final disposition make
In momentous marriage question; ever she outlines her plan
And she draws the knots of courtship, as in man and superman.

So Maud married as she listed, then by friends and fortune blessed
As fair Inez of the ballad—sailed out in the golden West.
Leaving Henry grieved and lonely—now as Love should close the door
Draw the blinds on his heart windows—he should see the light no more.

Yet he lit the lamp of memory—as before high altar place
Where the eternal light keeps burning in its dimness he could trace
That dear form of his heart's idol—as Madonna standing there
With religious fond devotion—made to it his daily prayer.

Ofttimes it was strangely answered—for in this ideal sphere
Came ethereal pleasures higher—than in sordid life appear.
Love is much imagination—that in dreamland fondly dwells
Living in its gorgeous castles—that reality dispels.

Came this kindly solace when he 'gainst his Fate no longer strove
He, in self renunciation found a pure unselfish love
That could worship at a distance—with the rapture of a saint
Keeping its ideal unsullied by an earthly touch or taint.

Yet his memory reinforcing,—he had portrait of her made
By the hand of master artist—with angelic charms displayed.
There stood Maud, a full length picture in bright colors, pure and warm
Stepping forward from the canvas—in her lifelike, breathing form.

As Pygmalion with his statue often he had fondly pressed
That loved form; set life a-glowing with the warmth in his own breast.
Praying that from marble fetters—his Hermione, should break
And in life's full realism his love-dream should fondly wake.

Unto his warmth unresponsive,—visioned only to the sight—
Ever in a hazy distance as a form of dreamland flight.
Yet there was a secret pleasure—in the picture he could find
To the one sad sense appealing—e'en as music to the blind.

Home—to him hope could not promise, nor the cheer of glad hearthstone.
Often at the vacant table of his club he sat alone
Gazing at the painted window—in whose misty colored gleam
He would trace the fondest pictures of his love-life's broken dream.

Of what might have been, then musing, had his love been full returned.
Would their marriage then have brought him—all for which his heart **had**
yearned?

Then he looked on mated comrades—each one bearing heavy cross
He could find some consolation—for his loneliness and loss.

Life hath many compensations—they who gain the wished-for prize
Tho it be not all a mirage—yet it shrinks in worth and size.
So, in choosing of its pathways—neither one will bring content
Other road will seem the fairer—such is man's untoward bent.

On such phrases of soured wisdom could his disappointment catch
As our Shakespeare says, "with proverbs, he his wounded heart would patch"
And with fond Religion's solace as its hackneyed maxims teach,
"Be content with what God gives you—He knows what is best for each."

Never heard he of his cousin—her reality had flown
From his life and her adventures—were a blank,—to him unknown.
Nor would think of her as married for his heart would yet remain
Sealed up in its lone affection,—blind to that which gave it pain.

He had hoped for her in kindness—she a happy life should find
And unto such tender blossom—that the rude west wind be kind.
He—too honest and too noble,—never jealous tinge had yet
Made him wish that her selection—should bring pang of keen regret.

Then to fill his life's long tedium, he would travel,—went abroad,
But upon the Alpine summit—still he saw the face of Maud.
Flying far in distant regions, yet the wanderer and romaunt,
Found her presence ever near him,—every place she still would haunt.

There on rich cathedral windows—in each sweet angelic face
Peering down on him from cloudland, he, Maud's features still could trace.
All that spoke of love and beauty in the finer tones of art
Seemed to him the same old echo of that longing in his heart.

On he wandered farther eastward—as tho in some orient morn
Under changing constellations—in new life he were reborn.
That his star of birth should guide him on to some more hopeful quest
So his old love-hunger dying—be forever set at rest.

Yet the unlaid phantom followed—and her image haunted him
In the shadow of sad Memnon—on the desert's golden rim.
Found in no land Lethe's river—where his memories could be drowned
Even tho his wandering footsteps circled far the earth around.

Travel-wearied,—in far regions—tho each famous tower and wall
Could speak forth its well-known annals—famous histories recall,
Yet tired out with strange adventures—he now turned from his long roam
Drawn unconscious by some magnet, to his vacant, cheerless home.

There his place again assuming—life went with him as was wont,
All that friends and wealth could bring him; nor exiled from fashion's haunt
Yet a quaint and quiet humor kept him from its glittering maze
From the halls of dissipation and society's wild craze.

Years rolled by—yet touched him lightly; mellowed into middle age.
Wise—experienced—yet his knowledge came not from a sullied page.
Tho by lure of wealth surrounded—by temptations sorely tried,
He was held aloof unspotted—by respect and nobler pride.

Oft the butt of club companions; tho not doubting him sincere,
Yet on his asceticism looked they with a laughing sneer.
Why should he not live as others—sow his wild oats—have his fling,
And in their full round of pleasures—give himself wide sweep and swing.

Turning once upon them tartly—he rebuked them to their shame.
“They knew all the evils ’round them and should hold themselves to blame
For the festering pollutions, their own passions were the cause
They—who in pursuit of pleasure broke thru all the moral laws.

They were setting fine examples—with the talents in their hands
But for all that He has given, God a strict account demands
Judgment will come soon or later—and their consciences knew well
How in slippery path of vices—their footsteps took hold on hell.”

Was it pride that thus upheld him? Yea, the pride of birth and blood
And that “*nobless oblige*” him that all foulness he withstood.
Cleanliness of heart and spirit was to him as great a care
As that cleanliness of garment, fashion’s outside world must wear.

Vexed with club associations,—he would have his own fireside
There to gather ’round the semblance of a family life he tried,
Not a bachelor apartment in its selfish trimness cold
But the genial air and comfort of a gentleman’s household.

Yet his frequent entertainments more of charity partook,
Gathered oft were those whom scarcely high society would brook.
Sometimes, outcasts of hard fortune,—cared he not and made his boast
He would thus dispense his bounty where he found it needed most.

Yet at times his heart was sinking in o’er-clouded lonely mood,
Feeling this great teeming city was for him vast solitude.
E’en when wandering thru Broadway, crowds and faces mile on mile
Held but careless eyes of strangers—passed without one genial smile.

Once appeared at unknown window—as he looked up from the pave
Very likeness of Maud's features—almost recognition gave.
Yet the eyes were moist with weeping—looking far thru misty haze
As from out her prison grating, Charlotte Corday's wistful gaze.

By that window picture haunted—Maud there looking thru her tears
Unto him with pathos pleading—far across the long, long years.
Strange presentment it brought him, with a weird forboding dim
That some fated—fatal presence—now was hovering over him.

As the weird anticipation sometimes met upon the street,
Sees some well-known friend approaching, finds a stranger when we meet.
Yet on turning 'round the corner—startled there that friend we find
Who had thus projected image on the mirror of the mind.

* * * * *

Why was it that some wild rumors by himself were never heard
Telling of Maud and her husband—that some dark events occurred
Casting deeper shadow o'er them,—e'en a whispering there came
That their life course had been downward into poverty and shame.

But these undertone suspicions, came not unto Henry's ears,
Maud was yet to him remaining paragon of former years,
And he still gazed on her picture—nor from that love was estranged
Feeling,—that like his affection, she by years could not be changed.

As a lost child of fond parents, called by death in early years,
Still its image never changing, in love's memory appears
As a flower ever blooming,—they thus find the strangest truth
Death tho taking, yet will leave them child of an immortal youth.

* * * * *

On the Brooklyn Bridge Van Cortlandt,—strolling thru the starlit night
As was often his quaint custom—there to scan that wondrous sight.
Standing as o'er earth suspended, near above Heaven's spangled arch,
And the shining constellations—in their slow yet steady march.

Harbor lights gleamed far below him—crossing o'er the glittering tide,
And beyond,—the maze of street lamps, lining city far and wide.
Then he mused upon the picture—whereupon these lights were shed
For he knew the joys and sorrows of that world before him spread.

Far beyond were halls of splendor, where Wealth held its glittering dance
Yet hardby in gloom hereunder, were chill Poverty's dark haunts.
Highest lights and deepest shadows, in that picture strangely blend
Thus the marches of our progress—to such contrast ever trend.

Aye—in those dark depths beneath him, buried in the whelming wave
What sad lives and stories hidden, in that deep untimely grave
Here the fatal spot where outcast—that chill plunge to death would dare
In these silent waters seeking, last sad refuge of despair.

Why were these thoughts preying on him—were they from some presence near?
Turning, he saw form of woman—crouching as in furtive fear,
Moving slowly on, he watched her—and her movements keenly eyed,
As he saw her quickly rise up—starting to the bridge's side.

Something told him of her purpose,—turned he quickly and before
She could leap—in that act caught her, drew her back upon the floor,
There in his arms she sank fainting;—one look in those eyes—Great God
This forlorn and outcast woman—was the wreck of Cousin Maud!

Was it chance brought them together? There he held his helpless load
Called assistance and a carriage—to his home they swiftly rode.
Therein carried her scarce breathing—tho she yet with life was warm
And upon a couch they laid her, almost in death's stiffening form.

Doctors,—nurses—quickly summoned,—By their stimulants and skill
Lamp of life so low and flickering—was relit—kept burning still.
Yet small hope of her recovery—their experience could give
For the woman broken hearted had no earnest will to live.

From the shock of recognition—scarce Van Courtlandt could assume
Mood of calmness—tho there seated in his own accustomed room.
Mutely to himself repeating—Could she come to such an end?
Maud—and this crushed shape of woman—aye the pictures would not blend.

And by chance it strangely happened that Maud's portrait hung anear,
But between it and this woman—scarce a likeness could appear.
Nor the contrast comprehending,—keen he felt his pulses start
As tho by strange syncopation—his heart currents pulled apart.

Scarce could gird himself together,—shattered by the shock, unmann'd
Seemed his world about him falling, as a house built on the sand.
Now its first excitement over, mute he sat as in a daze
Peering out to find some pathway—thru a world's dark, blinding haze.

For in such keen sharp denouement,—age's ruin, thus had grown
From that youthful angel picture—to this outcast on him thrown.
Had Pygmalion found his idol—all in ruins,—broken—crushed.
Passions thus had found no outcry—but were silent, mute and hushed.

Had his thoughts this sad subcurrent—with the wish that she had flown
From his sight and life forever, nor in such guise had been known?
Such desires were vain and selfish,—these he stoutly must repress
Making all his strength and spirit—minister to her distress.

For,—tho changed so from ideal—yet the woman still was there,
One of his own blood beseeching—only charity and care.
And tho now a wreck and ruin—yet this casket, broken,—flawed
Still might hold its wonted treasure—in the heart and soul of Maud.

Love is not all admiration,—as the climbing clustering vine
'Round a broken, ruined column,—it more closely will entwine.
Then came there the flush of pity—as this soiled and wounded dove
Plead with him in voice appealing for unselfish, nobler love.

As he stood in Death's dark presence—gazing in the open gate
Pleading for a short reprieve, that the hours or days could wait
For some last and sad confession,—heart to heart might then outpour
This was his one fond petition—even dare he ask no more.

For few days of life returnant—strength could memory restore,
Hoped he that her load of sorrow would in weeping flood outpour.
Yet in face of death full gazing; she still held her wonted pride
And locked closely in her bosom—her life's story she would hide.

Yet his eye by wise experience plainly read in haggard look
All the history there written,—clearly as in printed book
Sad—that face of tender maiden—wrinkled and by sorrow marred
Seemed a map of life's misfortunes—harried o'er and battle-scarred.

Where was he—her sometime husband? Gone to his own proper place,
She would hide—no one should know aught of his crime and his disgrace
But good fortune gave no children;—poverty had made no brood
That in underworld remaining—should degrade Van Courtlandt blood.

Why had she not long before this made to him her trouble known?
Aye—too proud in her abasement—life's one grand mistake to own.
Yet when all was lost, then turning—she had managed by her work
To return and find her people in the old home of New York.

As one who afar has wandered—outcast in life's blinding maze
In their last hours keen recalling home and friends of youthful days,
Feeling that their life's poor ashes should return to mother breast
And be gathered to their people—lie with them and be at rest.

Peradventure she might meet him,—at his feet she fain would kneel,
Hide her face lest her worn features life's sad tragedy reveal.
Would he not look down with pity—as repentant tears would flow
Grant her one last word of kindness,—he who loved her long ago.

She had died in expiation of her life's disgrace and fall,
Death indeed and her repentance surely would atone for all,
They would find her name upon her, that her family be known
And would write "Maud Miserere" on her low memorial stone.

Ah, that fond belief we cherish, that the dull cold ear of death
Yet can hear—will fondly listen for some kindly whispering breath
From old friends who there in pity—some few tears of sorrow weep
Dewdrops on remembrance flowers—there above the dreamless sleep.

Grief hath luxury of sweetness—in the sad Adagio close
When the tragic wail of sorrow sinks in silent, calm repose,
Then upon the heart's emotion softer influence it lays
Than the jubilant rejoicing in the blatant hymn of praise.

As the richer, warmer colors show in Autumn's fading leaf
In his sympathetic sorrow came this luxury of grief.
Love made more intense by pity,—and these days with fondness rife
Seemed a fitting tender cadence to the love-dream of his life.

Constant care and loving kindness—brought new life in Maud once more,
Changed her care-worn features, traces of her beauty could restore,
And to him her broken-heart chords gave a sad responsive thrill
As the crushed and bruised flower can the sweeter scent distill.

Warmth and flush of life returnant—as a sunset's afterglow
Brings a tender, softer beauty—than the loud, strong colors show,
As the sweet St. Martin's summer—seems a tender, distant chime
Echoing in ritornello—glories of the summer time.

Some few days of convalescence kindled hope of life again,
And the kindly wise physician would not quench the hope tho vain
Tho he saw in her eye-glances—life was but a flickering light
That had burned down to the socket—soon would quench in death and night.

Yet in those few weeks of lingering, she could then her heart unload
All its pent up grief and suffering—as a reservoir o'erflowed
Thru the floodgates of remembrance,—and all this seemed dear to him
Love and sympathy outpouring—filled his heart-cup to the brim.

Owned her waywardness in childhood; she admired but could not love
Him, her lofty, stately cousin—he appeared to stand above
So that she would feel o'ershadowed, love would mate with equal rank.
But its lottery played her falsely—she had drawn a wretched blank.

When she found her husband wanting,—love unto dislike had changed
But she stifled her affections—with a heart from him estranged.
Ah—could that bond have been severed,—then to Henry she had flown
And her broken heart and spirit—at his feet had fondly thrown.

Yet she bore misfortune bravely—without murmur or complaint
With a mute and silent patience—well becoming olden saint
And down in her deep abasement, in her low despairing mood,
She had kept a soul untainted—ne'er had stained Van Courtlandt blood.

Then her love in stronger current—back to Henry had been turned,
For his nobleness and manhood,—ah, how she regretful yearned!
With such longing for his presence—he was ever in her thought
Came to him this sad confession, with a deeper meaning fraught.

Was it this love's strong influence—reached thru years and distance wide
By strange telepathy keeping Maud's sweet picture by his side,
Could her love, as far-off magnet—hold him true to her alone.
Is there spirit correspondence to our Science yet unknown?

Sad—the parting of their pathways. Had they ne'er been separate
But had joined their lives together—then how different her fate
Cherished by his love and kindness, and the life that should have been
She had grown Madonna fairer than the Raphael Sistine.

And that form of ideal beauty, deeply printed on his heart
Had been moulded in child features,—in new life had taken part.
So that Love's immortal longing, thus had its fulfillment found
In new births still marching forward unto Time's remotest bound.

Yet all this had now gone glimmering,—still his hopes tho fond and vain
Brought to him the saddened sweetness, of a dying cadence strain
As we watch the fading sunset, when Night's dewy mantle falls,
So love seems to grow intenser, when Death's shadow o'er it palls.

Ah—could he to life recall her,—health and happiness restore,
He would find in this devotion, all his love would ask and more,
But hope gave no peradventure, and while lingering on life's brink
Love must from the emptying chalice, take a deep, long, lasting drink.

Every moment grew more precious—as for those who summons wait
Knowing it the knell of parting at Death's dark and closing gate,
And love ever grows intenser with that fatal fear o'er cast,
Dearer is the blooming flower, whose frail beauty cannot last.

* * * * *

It was late—a summer evening—and the hour of sunset came
Folding o'er the dying day-god-canopy of cloud and flame,
Flooding all the room with crimson,—on her couch Maud lay at rest
Gazing with a wistful longing at the cloudlands of the west.

Life had made its meek surrender, and the parting hour was near
She could read the summons bravely,—uncomplaining, without fear
For Death came as shining angel,—bearing her with gentle hand
From her earth of pain and suffering, to that golden sunset land.

“Henry! I must soon be going, I can hear the call too clear
And I feel life’s tide is ebbing, come you cannot be too near,
Then he would have called for others,—but not now, she wanted none,
In this last sad hour of parting,—she were fain they were alone.

From her pillow then uprising, she would look on day again,
Struggle over,—now no suffering, she had lost the sense of pain.
As he gazed upon her features, eyes were set in some strange dream
As tho shining gates were opened, flooding her in light’s full stream.

In her setting eyes a radiance, as in gallery picture shown
In “Jerusalem the Golden” where a halo light is thrown
From the dying girl’s bright features,—as tho sinking soul could throw
Mellow light o’er life’s horizon—like the sunset’s afterglow,

Lumined with that light celestial, even the portrait o’er her now
Had not that ethereal beauty streaming radiant from her brow.
Saintlike suffering, love-heroic concentrated in that glance
With a deeper, nobler passion—than the youthful countenance.

Love—perchance the hope indulging that beyond Death’s curtain blind
In a brighter world resurgent—its fulfillment it should find
And a spiritual union, with that one—its own true mate
Future life be thus atoning for this world’s untoward fate.

In that glowlight of life’s sunset, eyes and brow with crimson flushed
All her fainting spirits gathered, and as from full fountain gushed
In one strong and tense expression, all that lay within her heart,
Making love’s bond everlasting, that not even Death should part.

Mantling Twilight drew them closer—as he brought her—face to face.
“Good night Henry!” and she clasped him in last lingering embrace
While he held her slowly sinking—felt her heart give one wild leap
Then a flutter and a silence—and he laid her down to sleep.

* * * * *

Sorrowing, he yet was thankful, for these lingering farewells
Love and Death bound them together in a wreath of immortelles,
And as he had held her dying,—seemed, her soul when it had flown
Had by strange reincarnation—came and merged into his own.

So the tragedy was ended—Love's last greeting dear and fond
With its bright celestial vision, linked his life to that Beyond.
Following her, would ne'er look backward,—nor would his young love recall,
Then he took Maud's youthful picture, turned its face unto the wall.



Morna Hildebrand

AS a lofty promontory—crowning a romantic scene,
Stands the high cliff overlooking, this fair river's deep ravine,
And the old familiar story—as tho born unto the place
Here is wreathed by Indian romance, in the legends of his race.

Once upon this jutting headland, where the Southern hunting-grounds
Elbowed the dividing river farthest toward the northern bounds,
Came a pair of Indian lovers, fleeing from a chieftian's wrath,
And from jealous ire of parent; here found barrier to their path.

Down the silver Shenandoah, up by deep Potomac's flood,
Brought to bay on this high cliff-top, like the hunted deer they stood.
Flying here, could fly no farther; death for him behind them lay,
And for her a meek surrender, as the hated rival's prey.

Eyes, with Love's fond tear-drops streaming, looked in Death's near-frowning
face,

Yet they ne'er should be divided; closing in one last embrace
Down they leaped into the river; there they found a kindly grave,
And a fond romantic memory to the nameless cliff they gave.

For 'tis human to love lovers; though all in oblivion falls,
King and chieftain; of their battles history no name recalls.
Still the well-remembered legend lingers round this dizzy steep,
After-times and other races call it "Indian Lovers' Leap."

* * * * *

Days thereafter when the Indian vanished to the sunset lands
And this country was surrendered to the paleface's stronger hands,
Then the march of modern progress, bridged this yawning chasm o'er,
Stretching slender bands of iron from this steep to farther shore.

From the depths beneath appearing as a gossamer on high,
Web of spider interthreaded, 'gainst the azure of the sky.
Yet on those tense nerves of Iron tightly drawn in slender span,
Teeming continents their commerce in a grand life current ran.

* * * * *

Came the day when steed of iron, with its shrill and piercing neigh,
Frightened all the mellow echoes of the old post-horn away.
When no longer from the village boastful Jehu drove his team,
But more skillful hand held throttle 'neath the flying mane of steam.

When the iron road was threaded o'er the valley's central plain,
Stringing up each town and village, as upon a rosary chain;
Far and wide through all that region, where its warning sounded clear,
Well-known was the fleetest engine, Hildebrand was engineer.

"Brave and honest John" they named him. None than he had firmer hand
In the crisis of quick danger, none like he could firmly stand.
Duty was his one ambition; steadfast as the soldier brave,
To the breach he would go forward, though he marched into his grave.

* * * * *

At the outskirts of the village, where this sunny Southern ridge
Reaches farthest in the river, holding forth the iron bridge,
Here stood Hildebrand's low cottage, clad in shrubbery and flowers;
Here his humble home and hearthstone, where he spent his restful hours.

One fair daughter formed his household; at her mother's death had come
This one token of their union. She now filled his heart and home.
Nurtured long by foster-mother, as a bird in alien brood,
What, indeed, could be her nature but to run in wayward mood?

With a too indulgent father, who would cross his child in naught;
How to rule and curb her fancies, Morna never had been taught.
O'er the fields and cliffs a-roaming,—half a girl and half gazelle,
Looked upon by all the village as a hoiden, rustic belle.

And a wild and dangerous beauty grew in Morna's form and face;
Eyes of dark, full, lustrous splendor, limbs of lithe and supple grace.
But no social forms she heeded,—coming, going as she willed,—
While a father's pride and fondness every whim for her fulfilled.

All his joy was wrapped within her—proud of every step and look—
And no bar against her pleasure would his fond indulgence brook.
Ah! love e'er should go with wisdom—fondness keep in proper bound,—
Or, they lead to that dark pitful, where all broken hearts are found.

* * * * *

Who was this young trainman, Goldynge? At the village oft a guest;
On the wing in coming, going; here he made his place of rest.
And his face became familiar, where'er Morna came and went;
He was ever hovering near her, upon love and pleasure bent.

Yet not full and free his laughter, for beneath his merry mood,
Worn as mask, a hungry spirit with keen calculation stood.
Knowing all the world's dark stairways, for from lowest floor he came,
And he judged men at each station, in their hearts to be the same.

Filled with that same lustful hunger and the knaves preyed on the fools;
Faith, religion,—these amused him with their rigid moral rules.
Life to him was but sensation, without conscience;—None the less
Such a man in this bad era is the man to score success.

* * * * *

Ah! too sad! Why should I tell it? Why not hide it unconfessed?
But when these should come together, wisdom's sorrow knows the rest.
Sad for Morna's wild, fair beauty! Who would guard its precious rose
When with unrestrained, fond nature, trustfully it should uncloze

Its sweet bloom to this destroyer? Yes, he made it but his prey,
Took its fragrance and then cast it as a withered flower away.
Then he left in trifling mockery. Never once again he came.
Never more the village saw him; but it knew poor Morna's shame.

Where was now her father's manhood? Why could he no vengeance take?
With his strong hand and his courage, why not crush the slimy snake?
But the shock had all unmanned him; prone he fell beneath the stroke;
Hung his head in utter silence, while his strong, proud spirit broke.

For the wounds that come through children cut more keenly and more sharp,
Rending hope's fond heart-chords, leaving life a broken, untuned harp,
She, poor girl, was yet unconscious how Love's hand of promise chased
All her life from rosy garden out into a desert waste.

One sad scene within their cottage, when the truth to light was brought,
When his daughter stood before him, knowing his unspoken thought.
"Father I can never bear it—your reproach I cannot brave,
I will not live to disgrace you—I will hide me in my grave."

Fainting, falling down before him, with her fault and all confessed;
But with stronger arm he raised her,—laid her head upon his breast;
Soothed her with calm words of comfort; placed his hand upon her brow:
"Morna, you are still my daughter. Death can never help it now.

"You must live and bear it bravely; your old father's love shall stand
'Twixt you and the scornful finger, that the world from many a hand—
And heart less innocent than yours is,—still will point with curling lip,
As though glad to vaunt their virtue by reproof of your one slip!

"Yes, the world is closed against us, but the sunshine will not cease,
Here, in your old father's cottage, you shall live in lonely peace.
"And in all this gloom, one comfort: From me you will never rove;
And I still will love you only, as can wounded spirits love."

* * * * *

Years rolled by, well-nigh three lustrums. Never trace of him who fled;
Save from slope of far Pacific, came report that he was dead.
Hiding from a father's vengeance—dead to those he left behind
Yet he lived and wealth was reaping,—all his eager hand could find.

Hildebrand still ran his engine, year by year and day by day,
Like the sun and starry clock-work, and in like mechanic way.
No new hope lit his horizon, spirit-broken, without heart,
Like the great machine he guided, of it he but seemed a part.

But the human mechanism will grow old with wear and tear,
And the rusty heart-valves breaking, cease, and there is no repair.
Gray hairs told the time not distant, when with folded arms abreast,
He must leave his long life-service, and must go to his last rest.

* * * * *

On a time when early spring-light danced upon the river's flood;
In the restful hour of noon-tide, Morna by her window stood,
Watching group of men alighting from a train upon the pier,
With their busy air betokening some unusual moment here,

For a Railroad King was coming, his new conquest to survey,
With its bridges, its equipments, and the country by the way.
As he owned its life's great channel, with a flush of pride he felt
That indeed he owned the region, and they too that therein dwelt.

Stood he grandly with his followers, cynosure of all the crowd,
Clad in dignity and broadcloth; wise, and of his wisdom proud.
Men of science, law, and letters, in his service, one and all,
Ready stood with trained obeisance, answering to his lightest call.

Each one eager in self-seeking, working for his private end,
As of old to make the Mammon of unrighteousness his friend.
There the Press, with its reporters, hung upon his lightest word,
To proclaim in every corner, as though spoken by the Lord.

Aye, feared more than the Almighty;—greatest he of gods they knew;
For Jehovah and his mandates were too distant from their view.
And this man was the dispenser of their wherewithal to live;
So they rendered him the homage that deceitful hearts can give.

* * * * *

But a sudden change came o'er him. Silent here he stood abashed,
As with keen, quick recognition, a remembrance o'er him flashed.
Though long years of camp and city, crowded full with deeds and schemes,
Dulled for him his early history, into half-forgotten dreams.

And so changed was all about him: Youthful life would now appear
As a dim and wild existence, in some former narrower sphere;
Grown so great in power and riches, he could safely smile upon
All his youth's wild acts and follies,—even crimes that he had done;—

Yet as memory flashed out clearly, in its strong and shriveling light,
Shrank he to his former station, in that day of fear and flight.
And those years of apprehension, when in dread each corner place
Turned he, fearing lest before him, should start forth an angry face,

And the outraged father's vengeance, its strong hand upon him lay;
Shake the quivering life from out him; stamp him into shapeless clay.
Here again, this spot was haunted with its atmosphere of dread,
For the hair-hung sword of vengeance still was dangling o'er his head;

And he felt an eye upon him, whence it glanced he could not tell,
Yet beneath an evil influence, he was fastened by its spell
In that dread that chills the sleeper, when he, roused from slumber deep
Finds regardant eye down-casting baleful stare above his sleep.

Rose a strange weird premonition, from this well-remembered spot
Fate and tragedy were weaving, round his life a fatal plot,
Turned he quickly, as though fearing clouds this noon-day light should dim,
And from their dark depths the lightning's blood-red hand should reach for him.

* * * * *

Crimson flush came o'er her temples, when from window he was seen;
Morna quickly recognized him, spite of altered face and mien.
Beard of gray, and crafty wrinkles, could not hide that piercing eye,
While each look and step revealed him by the marks that cannot lie.

Knew him! aye, her wounds reopened; he, the man who wrought her shame
And the far-famed railroad magnate, Richmond Goldynge, were the same!
He—the dastard and deserter—mangre his low crime and guile.
Now a favorite of fortune—standing thus in Kingly style.

Clad with honor, riches, glory;—while her father, old and poor,
With his daily toil scarce keeping wolf of hunger from their door.
Where was now the God of Justice, with his all-surveying eye,
Good rewarded; wicked punished. Bah! 'tis all a canting lie.

Men, whose hands with crime are reeking, at the world's front boldly stand;
Honored they above all others. Surely evil rules the land.
What though death doth promise justice, and its balance to restore,
Must we wait till life is ended,—till we reach some unknown shore?

This is faith's fond, flattering unction for the wronged and injured ones.
Death is silence,—and life's falsehoods still line its memorial stones.
So she raved, but one dread secret safely locked she in her breast:
Her old father should not know it, lest it might disturb his rest.

* * * * *

Near the group of men a stripling, clad in fireman's garb, stood by,
Looking on the scene in wonder, with a youth's bewildered eye.
Haply as untutored peasant gazes on a king and throne,
Feeling in that august presence life and soul are not his own;

For he knew these were the masters, by whose favor he was fed,
And their lightest word and bidding might withhold his daily bread.
Goldynge did not note the stripling, though full in his sight he stood,
Nor once dreamed that this poor fireman was of his own flesh and blood.

* * * * *

There had come unto the village—one, who summoned workman throng,
Told how deeply they were suffering—from injustice and from wrong
By our rotten social system,—they in serfs and slaves were turned,
With the master money-makers taking all their toil had earned.

That the ruthless landlord pirates—to all reasoning were deaf.
That the workers now combining—must strike for their own relief.
As their masters would not listen—unto justice plea for right
Only one recourse was left them, this—the bomb and dynamite.

So he stirred up hot heart burnings, in those who had been content,
Envy and caste-hatred waiting, for some chance to give them vent.
Leaving his impress upon them,—ere his firebrand way he went
He had taught and fully armed them with the Anarch's argument.

* * * * *

Merry May now brought its brightness. Its soft winds a rumor fanned
That the railroad King should marry fairest daughter of this land.
So his parasites and henchmen stirred all circles with their joy
That his gracious choice had fallen on Eugenia Fauntleroy.

Came she of a haughty lineage, proud of her superior race,
What indeed was her ambition but a palace hall to grace?
With her beauty decked in diamonds, brow with coronal aflame,
There to reign in golden splendor was her life's one chiefest aim.

Did she ask his truth and virtue? These were names of shadowy things.
She would choose the solid substance, gold and luxury it brings.
Marriage is a glittering bargain. Love is but a romance old.
Maiden beauty goes in barter for the crafty wizard's gold.

* * * * *

Morna heard these marriage tidings. Smothered heart-fires burst in flame.
She a poor soiled dove, forgotten—left unto her grief and shame.
Struggling with a resolution, she would to this sister go;
There reveal her own sad story; tell her all that she should know.

Would she not then spurn this monster? hold him up before the land,
All this craft and crime revealing in that light that he should stand.
Ah, poor Morna! unsuspecting; in the world's bad ways unlearned.
Had she gone with this, her story, from that door she had been spurned.

What would care the proud Eugenia for the rags he cast aside?
And the hearts she crushed in mounting, no remorse gave to her pride.
Sisterhood with one so fallen! She would quickly bar such claim,
And with proud, disdainful bearing her high virtue would proclaim.

And the world gives acquiescence, grovels round about her feet.
Who for wealth can sell her beauty—casts the other in the street.
Yet before God's high tribunal who would palm of virtue hold?
She who fell through love confiding, she who sells herself for gold?

* * * * *

In the gathering gloom of Nightfall, on this cliff sad Morna stood
Peering in the coming darkness, wrapt in black despairing mood.
No companion for her sorrow, none to whom she could impart
That deep bitterness that rankled in recesses of her heart.

Years had not allayed the fever; like the deep volcano's ire,
It had slumbered through long ages, forth to burst in fiercer fire.
Blacker grew her brow and brooding. Only one light far and dim
Glowed in the surrounding darkness—on the sunset's lurid rim.

All the hope in her horizon, like that red ensanguined light,
Came in one last gleam of vengeance, ere her life should close in night.
In her hand, once soft as velvet, sweet with love's caressing clasp,
Now she held a fearful missive, held with nervous, angry grasp.

There in that small globe of iron, seemingly a harmless shell,
Lay red ruin and destruction; all the vengeful fires of hell.
Weapon dire,—the crushed and trampled, barred from every earthly court,
Make one last appeal for justice, come to this as last resort.

* * * * *

Peering down in river chasm, there a grayish glimmer spread
O'er that grave where Indian lovers from a hostile world had fled.
Then she thought of sad Winona,—while her heart with hope was high
Death had sealed her with her lover, in one long unbroken tie.

Gladly she would seek oblivion, but less kind had been her fate;
Worse than death, love's hand had brought her; Love itself was turned to hate.
In that underworld of shadows she her sorrow would entomb,
But she would drag down the traitor. He wrought and should share her doom.

Long white arms reached from the water, waving, pointing where she stood,
Skeletons of mist, and specters, rising from the murky flood.
Fancy's wild, disordered vision saw in these a phantom crowd
Trailing death-robcs, hands outstretching, holding forth a ghostly shroud.

Then the mist rose up around her, hiding all the world from sight,
And she felt as but a shadow, shrinking in the film of night.
Till a great fire-breathing monster, through the cloud with rattling train,
Startled her from realm of shadows, back to world of grief and pain.

* * * * *

Day of gladness and rejoicing;—through the country far and near
Was proclaimed their day of marriage, in the high noon of the year.
Brighten all the road with garlands; scatter bloom along their way.
All the folk must smile upon them, on this sunlit holiday.

Planned were their grand preparations. From his palace would he come,
As by magic wand transported—take the fair bride to his home.
Golden chariot wreathed in flowers,—fiery griffin for their steed.
What were dreams or scenes of Orient? This were bridal train indeed.

Crowds at every station gathered as the pageant flew along.
Merry bells were set a-ringing; cheers and shouts came from the throng.
E'en the air was bright with gladness; flocked together youth and age.
Never was such regal wedding, or such royal equipage.

Strange how men will worship splendor;—glitter dazzles every eye.
Up goes cap to Fortunatus, as his golden car rolls by.
Never ask they, "whence the splendor?" Never dream that they themselves
Pay for all the gold and glitter by their empty cupboard shelves.

Aye, the human heart is slavish; sight of crown and scepter bring
Unto each the servile feeling, "Live forever, mighty King!"
Ask they not of worth and virtue. Wealth and power alone they see,
In that ideal they worship what they fain themselves would be.

Nor ye poor look on with envy! Ye with willing hearts and hands
Build the road in hope of mounting that bad height where Cræsus stands.
As the illpaid hireling soldier, eager with his arms and sword
To defend the tyrant's sceptre, and protect his golden hoard.

* * * * *

For the home returning journey there was called John Hildebrand,
With his fleet and famous engine he should speed them o'er the land.
But a dark misgiving seized him, as he mounted to his place,
And his engine, decked with garlands, brought no gladness to his face.

"Father, why are you so silent? Bright and glad shall be our trip."
Then upon his hand a tear dropped, and the old man's quivering lip
Told him of a strange foreboding: "Ah! my boy! I know not why,
But this is my last long journey,—and I feel that home is nigh.

"Yesternight, the fireman told me, that he saw hard by the bridge
Dreaded ghost of Indian maiden, stalking on the misty ridge.
"Then while opening his fire-door, spectral engine hurtled by,
With a train of funeral blackness streaming through the clouded sky.

"Grinning Death-head held the throttle, and a ghastly engine light
Pierced the mist, then, streaming by him, soon was lost in depths of night.
"Ah! that ghostly engine-driver never runs an empty train,
And it crosses that dark river, whence it ne'er returns again."

* * * * *

Croesus in his flaunting galleon, rolled upon the highest tide
Of success and fortune's favor, sat beside his radiant bride.
Courtiers gaily thronged around them, burdening the perfumed air
With their unctuous smiles and flattery lavished on the happy pair.

Visions of her palace splendor filled the fair Eugenia's sight,
And she felt the flush of conquest as she reached ambition's height.
Never dreaming that the mountains show the awful depths below;
Pride must pay its price in perils that the lowly never know.

Goldynge took the homage lightly, knowing with his strong, sharp sense
That this parasitic flattery was but sham and vain pretense.
Yet he felt the soothing influence, felt the power of his pelf;
He revered the hand that grasped it; fondly worshipped he himself.

Held he more than power of mortal. All his past forgotten now.
Thought of Morna never entered, casting shadow o'er his brow.
What was one poor maiden's ruin! When Ambition upward starts,
Reckless will it march on through it, pave its way with broken hearts.

* * * * *

But aye! she had not forgotten. By the bridge she took her stand
With a heart nerved to its purpose,—that dread missile in her hand.
When she heard a far-off cheering,—then she knew the train was there,
And the world was paying homage to that proud and hated pair.

For the sound of this rejoicing seemed but a triumphal vaunt.
Lauding him who had betrayed her—and for her a stinging taunt.
Once again the whistle sounded. Slowly moved the engine near.
Now her heart had ceased its beating, and her lips grew pale with fear.

Must she fly, forego her vengeance; would she, flinching, turn at last?
Nerves of steel shook as with rigor; now and here the die is cast.
Faster moved the train on by her. Looked she,—saw in frenzy wild
There, upon the flower-decked engine, her own father and her child:

But too late,—the set spring let go. With a quick convulsive jerk
From her hand flew that dread missile,—flew unto its deadly work.
Though the aim was not unerring,—though the golden car went clear,
Yet it struck the great bridge-girder, where it lay upon the pier.

* * * * *

Called forth by the noise and cheering, to the platform in the rear
Goldynge had gone forth, and proudly stood while plaudits filled his ear.
Then from that last station starting, moving toward the river bridge,
Wide he glanced o'er all the region, to the far blue mountain ridge;

Quiet calm came o'er his feelings; there the balmy eventide
Filled the air with dewy fragrance,—made sweet incense to his pride.
All the day had passed so lovely; not a discord marred the tune,
At his city home this journey would be ended all too soon.

There a thousand lights were shining, waiting with their dazzling glance
To illumine this home-bringing, with a fete and joyous dance.
Proudly stood he on life's flood-tide,—at the zenith of his power:
"Soul, thy pleasures take at fullest." But God called him in that hour.

While his head was lost in cloudland,—quick there came a blinding flash,—
Palace, world and all about him, came down in appalling crash.
As though hill and cliff had tilted in one fearful thunder-clap,
And an earthquake's jaws were closing over him its yawning trap.

Fire-tinged was the air around him, stunned and startled by the shock,
Then in wrecked mass all rush downward, past the hard unfeeling rock.
For the great bridge-arm had severed, from its shoulder rudely lopped,
Down with all its precious carriage, helpless in the chasm dropped.

* * * * *

Horror quickens all the senses. Saw he through that fiery glare,
On the pier, aye well he knew her,—Morna Hildebrand stood there.
Venus changed to grim Alecto, with the lightnings round her brow;
And her arm was still uplifted as the vengeful Fury now.

Flowers and fire were raining on him, lurid was the air with blood:
Crime, despair, and doom before him, in flame outlined picture stood.
All his life passed—how he mounted unto this high throne and crown
Here his Nemesis had found him—at one blow had cast him down

In that fearful death's dread moment, filled with tortures and with fears
He endured remorseful ages,—lived he though, a thousand years.
Then her shrilling shriek of frenzy, piercing through him as a dart,
Richmond Goldynge passed to judgment, with that arrow in his heart.

Yet it was no shriek of vengeance,—came that cry from mother's breast
When unseen was Richmond Goldynge, and forgotten all the rest.
When the engine overturning, with its steaming, shrilling hiss,
Like a vast flame-panting dragon, tumbled down the dark abyss.

There she saw her boy, her father, stricken by her hand and doom,
Through the fiery vortex, falling, helpless in their watery tomb.
In that cry her life and spirit flew out on the troubled air,
Broken heart ceased beating,—left her cold as statue standing there.

* * * * *

Ages erst a festal fire-play ended in like lurid scene,
Printing it upon the vision of the youthful Florentine,
When he stood on banks of Arno—with a gay expectant crowd
Waiting till the starry splendor, should night's canopy enshroud.

Then with crowd of human victims burning bridge of Arno fell,
And beneath its weltering fire waves formed the circles of his Hell.
That black night of horrors, painted in the Tuscan poet's page,
Has outlined death's dark Inferno for the world since that far age.

* * * * *

There that crowd that worshipped splendor, hanging on the skirts of power,
Polished courtier, friend and follower, all went down in that dark hour,
While the marriage jests were ringing, hearts with joy and laughter blithe,
Struck without a moment's warning by the sweep of Death's fell scythe.

Nor had they sinned more than others; Christ's own words of wisdom tell,
No worse than their brethren were they on whom Siloam's tower fell.
Tears for them, for they were human, and they followed that one light,
That the world gave to their vision. God alone knows what is right.

It must needs be that offenses in this evil world will come;
Woe! when vengeance brings its curses, like the ravens, flying home.
Nor alone on the offender strikes the fiery bolt of wrath;
As the whirlwind of destruction, blind, it blasts all in its path,

* * * * *

Helpless in Fate's cataclysm, sinking in fire-shrouded graves,
Deep the river rolled above them, with its calm, unconscious waves.
Then from that lone, awful stillness, Darkness reached its clasping hand,
And the mother went down with them to the Silent Shadowland.

There in that wide burial closing,—pride, revenge, ambition, all
Sank deep in the silent Unknown, covered by Death's funeral pall.
So the Tragedy is ended—in the dark unfathomed deep
After life's vain, fitful struggle—there they all together sleep.

* * * * *

And the city's golden palace blazed with light till morning gray,
But it never more was lighted; nay, not even to this day.
For a curse still lingers o'er it. In its dark deserted hall,
Yet, they whisper—there at midnight, Death holds spectral carnival.

And the cottage on the cliffside,—vacant too,—a place of dread,
Overgrown with weeds and rankness,—seems but landmark of the dead.
There at times the lone wayfarer, in night's haunted gloom may trace
Shadow of the Indian maiden,—phantom of her vanished race.

Siegfried

THE HERO OF WAGNER'S NIBELUNG TRILOGY

To the Memory of

Dr. Leopold Damrosch

“LET there be Light!” Thenceforth darting from the sun-god’s blazing
throne

Through the dragon-folds of darkness, sword-like rays of glory shown,
And the winding warp of Chaos, dun and colorless, unrolled,
To be woven through with sunfire’s heat and hues and threads of gold.

Shredded waste and filmy mist-seas, woof with form and color fills,
Lining out of earth’s features—waters, forests, meads, and purple hills—
Crowned by man, unto his vision, its bright tapestry unfurled
All the gorgeous panorama of a new created world.

In that same loom Time the Weaver lines the history of mankind
Weaving light supernal—knowledge in the grovelling Chaos blind
Of the savage, whose dim gropings—wild chimeras slow unfold
In the forms of law and order, that men into nations mold.

Ever still Time’s shuttle flying, wilderness and waste are lined
With the arteries of empire, for the march of man and mind
While ignoble hut and hovel, in the wild and desert place
Rise into the spires and splendors of the grander, nobler race.

And yet Progress brings its conflicts. Still the sad, stern rule of life
Finds the road to light and glory leads through toil and blood and strife.
In the front of Light’s mailed legions, hosts of darkness e’er are found
Borderlands of storm and sunshine yet remain Truth’s battle ground.

As it was in the beginning, on through Time's remotest page,
Sons of truth still ever struggling with the darkness of their age;
Every hero, prophet, martyr, whom Heaven sends into the fight,
Through the reptile coils of evil, strikes with Siegfried's Sword of Light.

THE RHEINGOLD

WAVING waters, weaving sunlight through the depths where Rhine-flood
rolled,

There disported the Rhine-maidens, careless guardians of its gold,
Days of innocence untempted—'neath the world's bright morning skies,
Radiant with the light that shimmered through the palms of Paradise.

But into that childhood's garden, from beneath the serpent crawled,
In dark Alberich's horrid aspect, and the maidens fled appalled;
There he seized the glowing treasure, piling curses on his crime—
Downward with his plunder plunging to the depths of Nibelheim.

With the crime and curse came ruin. Cloud and mist blot out the wave,
While the Rhine in darkness shrouded, sinks down in a gulphing grave,
As the sister's fairy circlet, when one gem was stolen away,
Palace and Elysian garden sank in darkness and decay.

Days primeval, when the Norse-gods roofless slept on Nature's breast,
In the flowery mead they wakened, filled with longing and unrest,
Pride had planned its wanted palace. Lo! afar in misty gleam
Golden splendor of Walhalla, rose to music as a dream.

There serene on mountain summit, in the dawning light it stands
As some castle of old romance, built at night by giant hands;
Seen by eyes of wistful longing—for between them and that steep,
Lay wide river vale of shadow that the gods might not o'erleap.

Boastfully the Titan builders, loudly come with clumsy stride,
To demand their goddess Hebe, as the price of splendor's pride,
By the runes on spear of Wotan, payment must be full and all,
Or down comes the throne of justice and the heavens in ruins fall.

Then the subtle fox's cunning must piece out the lion's hide,
So they sought the Nibelung coffers, and with wealth the giants plied,
For the ring and golden treasure, they Walhalla's bonds release,
And this world's power in their keeping shall sleep on in brutish peace.

Well—that thus the ring's dominion from the Nibelung had been torn,
Lest by intellect of demons, powers celestial were o'erborne,
So the rainbow arch of promise, bridges o'er the river wide
And the gods march to Walhalla, there in restful peace to bide.

THE VALKYR

ON the earth raged storm and struggle, rapine's torch lit up the night,
When disarmed and vanquished Siegmund, sought rude shelter in his flight.
In the hut finds captive sister, of his lineage and race,
Heart and soul they join together, while Spring's lovelight fills the place.

In that union came the promise, that a race of noble birth
Should supplant the rude barbarian and bring light upon the earth;
But too early. Many a hero, who the sword of Wotan draws,
Comes before his age, to perish in just—yet untimely cause.

“Might is right till right be ready.” Yet the struggle must go on;
Nor yet vainly dies the hero, who sees not the victory dawn,
Every martyr sows time's seed-field with his life-blood and his tears—
That shall grow to grander fruitage in the bloom of coming years.

Wild yet beautiful the sisters, whom strange fright and fancy form
Woman shapes, breasts, eyes and features, round shrill voices of the storm,
Riding phantom steeds of cloudland, from their brows death-glances fall,
And the warrior whom they shine on, answers Walhall's spectral call.

Valkyr Brynhild—a Minerva, sprang—not from the brain of Jove,
But a maiden, full warm-blooded out from Wotan's heart of love,
Yet, too ardent, outran wisdom—set obedience at naught;
She, therefor must bide and suffer for a cause untimely fought.

Heart inspired to wage truth's battle, yet must wait till it unite
With the intellect and manhood, that give strength to win the fight.
So Brunhilde on the mountain slumbers in fire-guarded keep
Until Time bring forth a hero who shall waken her from sleep.

SIEGFRIED

Proud, exultant art thou Siegfried! Strongest of the Sons of Light;
Incarnation of the sun-fire, panoplied with Odin's might,
Child of high Walhalla's heroes, sent down to the cloudy clime,
Where the people walked in darkness, and the gloom of Nibelheim.

Flushed with ardor of the spring-time, ruddy with the glow of youth
In the false fires of the Nibelung, forging keen the sword of Truth,
Fear is unknown to thy manhood, for the pure its thrall know not
Who the coward sin's infection from the world have never caught.

Bravely battling 'gainst injustice, thou shalt fight the dragon old
Tyranny and brute force grasping a world's treasure in its hold
Onward to the summons bravely, strike the monster in his lair
Though the fire-blast from his nostrils tinge with flame the trembling air.

Care not for his power or terror. Truth must never count its foes
On-right to the heart of error—there one death-stroke shall disclose
All the giant's blood and weakness, and life's current full outpoured
Leaves naught but a quivering reptile, vast but helpless 'neath thy sword.

And the blood that paints thy victory, fires the vivid sense to hear
Nature's deeper, nobler voices that elude the duller ear
As the pure in heart when triumphs on their brows the laurels place
Hear the whisperings of the Immortals, and can see God face to face.

When the song-bird of the forest sent thee to the rocky steep,
Where Brunhilde lay safe-guarded in the arms of fire and sleep.
In the kiss-awakened Valkyr, thou should find a peerless mate,
Whence a new-born race of heroes should the world regenerate.

In that waking and world greeting thrilled the music of the spheres—
Faith with Hope and Love Immortal rang down through the coming years
Promise of a world's redemption, like the herald angel's call,
"Comfort ye my people Israel," sounding over Zion's wall.

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

Sat the Nornir-Time's three daughters 'neath Igdrasil, Life's great tree—
Present, Past, and Future—weaving the dark web of destiny.
Suddenly the thread was sundered, breaking Asgard's golden chain,
Portent of the closing era and the Norse-gods' ending reign.

Siegfried, from his dalliance breaking, left Brunhild on mountain crest,
Manhood's strength without love's guidance went alone on knightly quest,
Journeying in the golden Rhineland, but alas! beneath the craft
And the snare of Nibelung fallen, he the fatal philter quaffed.

Hath success thy soul enfeebled? Victor of the fatal ring,
All that wealth and power can give thee, wedded sister of a king,
Hast betrayed thy hero mission, hast forgotten thine own bride,
Filled thy heart with earth's ambition, with its coarser greed and pride?

Siegfried, in the shining Orient Christ stood on the mountain height,
Tempted by the power of evil to forsake the path of right;
To enslave his nobler spirit, kneel unto the devil's throne,
Serve the world and selfish pleasures, then its kingdoms he should own.

But the godlike and heroic sternly crushed the tempter down,
Chose he poverty and suffering rather than an earthly crown,
And in martyred death his glory, far above Walhalla's height
Streams down through the 'luminated ages, the Immortal Light of Light.

Siegfried! give the Rhine its Rhine-gold, nobler soul within thee pleads;
Perils ask not power or pleasure as repay for priceless deeds.
Be true to thy holy mission, heaven-sent hero, high above,
Lust of life or its ambitions, or the luring voice of love.

Answerest thou in mocking accents? Aye, the gold its curse shall bring;
From the Norncliff Wotan's ravens even now start on the wing.
Ware thee, Siegfried! Child of Glory! Soon the Nibelung's evil powers
Victor o'er thy death exulting shall pull down Walhalla's towers.

DEATH SONG

O Brunhilde! are thou sleeping on the mount's fire-aureoled crest,
Waiting for love's kiss to loosen band of mail clasped o'er thy breast?
What strange spell benumbed my senses, what dark cloud betwixt us stood
Since the draught from poisoned goblet changed the courses of my blood?

But, by kiss of death awakened, mine eyes opened to the truth,
See once more the golden visions in the morning land of youth.
O Brunhilde! bride celestial, drawn to thee my soul doth come,
Wafted on ascending harp-chords to thine own ethereal home.

DEATH MARCH

Fate's footfalls invade the silence with the death-march sullen tread,
Heart-throbs beat with ghostly echo on the portals of the dead,
While the sigh of sorrow rises and in mournful cadence falls,
As the winds of twilight roaming through deserted forest halls.

Funeral fanfare, pomp, and pageant sound the glories passed away,
As the sunset's trailing splendors flare above the dying day,
Memory turns back the pages of his wondrous deeds and fame,
Muse of Tragedy enwreathing laurels round a deathless name.

One last gleam the sword of Siegfried fires up from his sable shroud,
As the arrow of the lightning leaps forth from the breast of cloud,
And the choric song of heroes peals down through Walhalla's arch
O'er the world reverberating in one mighty thunder march.

As the sparkling rill of childhood broadens into river wide,
As youth's rippling current deepens into manhood's stronger tide,
So the horn-call of young Siegfried, echoing from forest home,
Now rolls in wide-swelling anthem, filling all the starry dome.

Ocean storm of grief's defiance dashes up to heaven's gate,
But from spire in cloudland region strikes the horologe of Fate,
Still the knell reverberating, tolling o'er the angry surge,
Ebbing tide at last receding, sinks low in a sighing dirge.

So passed Siegfried, with him fading hero age of northern clime,
Last of the colossal shadows haunting the gray dawn of time,
While yet 'neath the north-light's flame arch bright Walhalla held its place,
And the morning stars were singing o'er the cradle of the race.

There, on that far rim of twilight, where night's shadows fringed the morn,
'Neath the dead moon of those ages, hanging low with waning horn,
Siegfried, last of Norse King warriors, lay upon his funeral pyre,
With his shroud of Rhine-mist crimsoned by Aurora's torch of fire.

Brynhilde, the death-marking Valkyr, now with voice of mourning came,
And in love's self-immolation lit the pyre with holier flame;
Sin and wrong had made atonement, expiate in fire and blood,
Yet, through Death's ordeal remaining, light of love eternal stood.

Not the final consummation; for, arising from the tomb,
All the noble and heroic spring forth in immortal bloom;
Yea, Life is a night's dark journey on 'til Death and Twilight gray
Lift the morning portals into an eternal sunlit day.

Love at last came forth the victor, where the hero's might had failed,
And its nobler dispensation, as Time's heritage entailed,
When self-sacrifice, devotion, and forgiveness should replace
All the stern revenge of Justice, and should thus redeem the race.

There the old Norse gods and warriors, who in terror-haunted clime
Fought and conquered earth's brute forces, Jotuns,—dragons of the prime,
In last death procession gathering, from the crypts of gloom emerge,
Then, as cloud-group mirage drifting, sink beyond th' horizon verge.

In the Pantheon of nation's, thus the bravest, manliest throng
Held themselves in strictest judgment to a power of right and wrong.
Self-doomed to their immolation, stern and steadfast moved they on,
Grim, gray phantoms slowly shrivelling in the rose-fires of the dawn.

Then the north-light flashed and faded in the orient's broadening beams
While Walhalla's flaming ruins vanished as in waking dreams.
Twilight of the gods, dissolving in the morning that had come,
Bringing sun to 'lume new ages with the light of Christendom.

Philante and I

To a Nobler Comrade

COME Philante,—let's be starting
Sunset path we now must roam,
You and I may soon be parting
When the night shall call us home.
We have braved life's changeful weather,
Climbed the hill; and now long past
Down its slope we march together,
Comrades, steadfast to the last.

Friend of youth!—our lives recalling
O'er the long, long road appears
Not one shadow ever falling
'Twixt us, during threescore years.
Now unto its close progressing
Looking back from this far end
I find heaven's richest blessing
In one lifelong sincere friend.

Thou—a leader and precentor
In each new and untried path,
E'er hast been for me a Mentor
Holding fast to one true faith.
In the devious ways,—when darkened
By the clouds that o'er us fall,
Choosing paths—I ever hearkened,
Following where thy voice should call.

When came sleek temptation, leading
In crook't path for worldly gain
I have seen, how Jesuit pleading
At thy judgment bar, was vain
For no casuistic veiling
Could o'ermist thy moral sight
Thy keen eye-glance never failing
To determine what was right.

When we set out on our journey
In the flush of youth and life
Brilliant list—as Romaunt tourney
Bade us to high, hopeful strife.
For a noble cause then fighting
Sought we Truth's pathway to clear
And by wrongs and evil righting
Make our world a better sphere.

Ardently, life's steep upclimbing
Hope outlooked on brighter page
Gladly were our footsteps timing
To the progress of the age.
When on hill of triumph standing,
Promised land before us lay,
Then we felt—the world expanding
Soon should reach millennial day.

Science—as a Syren singing,
Spell-bound charmed the youthful ear.
With the promise, she were bringing
In this world an ideal sphere.
Knowledge broadening—finer schooling
These should conquer sin and vice.
Then with Right and Justice ruling
Make this earth a Paradise.

Strange it seems,—that every era
Should in expectation stand,
Cherishing the fond chimera
It would reach the Promised Land.
Dream of nobler souls, thus hoping
Their Utopia to find,
But—the crowd keeps ever groping
As the blind led by the blind.

Tho—the great heart of a nation
Strives—that better times it bring;
Yet the personal equation
Always sways the priest and king.
And more oft, its chosen leaders
Will betray a people's trust,
Using all their powers as feeders
For their selfish greed and lust.

Thus the dreams of youth highhearted
At the goal of our fond chase
Found our expectations thwarted,
And the world—the same old place.
That in fact—our boasted science
Made inventions—a shrewd plan
For the strong,—a keen appliance
To enslave his fellow-man.

That the growth in wealth and splendor
But inspired the greed for pelf,
Higher power did but engender
Keener appetite for self.
Christians named—yet now forgotten
Every precept of Christ's creed.
In its place the filthy, rotten
Gospel of coarse Mammon's greed.

Sybarite—replaces Stoic.
Sham for culture spreads veneer,
Commerce looks on the Heroic
With a mild, contemptuous sneer.
Money—is the only measure
That can mete out human worth
Life is but for sensual pleasure.
Virtue—finds no place on earth.

We have watched the selfish scrambling
In this world's wild steep chase;
Saw—how filthy greed and gambling
Could all nobler aims displace.
What avail! the millions gathered
Cannot breed one finer thought,
And the lives by luxury feathered
Are with guilt and foulness fraught.

Yet the madding crowd is rushing
Avarice-lured or hunger led;
Everyone elbowing—pushing,
Striving fierce to get ahead.
God knows where our course is trending
If we keep on at this rate
Some black day will see the ending
Crash o'er that dark brink of Fate.

Time will bring its retribution.
When the cup fills to the brim
It o'erflows—then revolution
Brings revenges fierce and grim.
Mammon's towers although still heightening
But afford more shining mark
For the thunderbolt of lightning
That will lay them low and dark.

This prospect is not alluring;
History's warning gives forecast
How God's Justice long-enduring
Yet relentless falls at last.
Then come storm and cataclysm.
World again by deluge purged.
Towers and splendors down the abysm
In black ruin are submerged.

Yet the fierce tornado's onset
Only tears thru narrow path.
And the flaming fire-cloud sunset
Leaves a milder aftermath
So the remnant then abiding
May rebuild a nobler state
And in this hope, we confiding
Shall that brighter day await.

Tho the night-clouds darkly lower
And in shadow blind we grope,
Yet the watchman on the tower
Speaks the cheering voice of hope
Tells us with prophetic warning
That—tho' gloom o'erspreads the land
Darkest hour precedes the morning
And the day is hard at hand.

And this faith we fondly cherish.
Manhood's strength and human worth
Will fight bravely—nor let perish
Right and Freedom from the earth.
Of Republic not despairing
Time will bring some hero hand
Who—her temple walls repairing
Shall give Freedom firmer stand.

So—against the times untoward
And the ills we now endure
We will manfully face forward
Hoping time will bring the cure.
Think not that our fight is futile
Even tho from victory barred,
Noble aim is ne'er inutile,
Virtue brings its own reward.

For our own souls were made stronger
By those dreams of ardent youth,
And grew nobler, as the longer
Fought they for the right and truth.
Better so—tho not achieving
All we aimed for in our fight,
We should keep the faith believing
We were martyrs for the right.

Fame or Fortune did not call us
Forth to stand on their high crest;
Yet we have the kindly solace
In our way we did our best.
This old blind world might discover
Falseness of its halls of fame.
That its greatest progress mover
Oft is one of unknown name.

He who founds and rears the building
In oblivion oft is drowned.
He who does the cornice gilding
With the gold and fame is crowned.
So—be ourselves our dominion
Act each for himself—the man
Careless of the world's opinion
Heeding not its praise or ban.

And that truth of Christ confessing
Here fits with peculiar grace;
Grants the pure in heart the blessing
They shall see God face to face.
Not ambition's strife shall merit
Nor those proud in honor's birth
But the meek—shall still inherit
Choicest blessings of the earth.

They, who on proud heights are swelling
Must breast every storm that blows;
We, down in the valley dwelling
Find contentment and repose.
Life has many compensations
For the gifts that Fortune bars;
Small the distance 'twixt earth's stations
In the measures of the stars.

What tho in its last sad letter
Our philosophy doth teach
Only second best—scarce better
Is all that our efforts reach.
Yet the smallest advance gaining
Must our life and toil requite.
Ever then will be remaining
Points beyond our highest flight.

This Humanity's condition
Chase for rainbow gold—so fond—
Life's perfection and fruition
Ever stand in the beyond.
Endless—tireless evolution
No fixed place or halting stage
This is our one grand solution
Of the problems of the age.

History—a long procession
Thru the centuries,—cloudland flight
Moving in a slow progression
Onward to a broadening light.
There each human life comes sparkling
For a time in sunlight glow—
Perchance brilliant—yet soon darkling
Falls in shadow dark below.

There the myriads mix and mingle
In that current, small and great
And no life is separate—single
All together drawn by Fate.
Human dreams and hopes as frangent
There as phantasms fitly gleam,
Shouts of joy and griefs more plangent
Make the music of that stream.

Yet in that great concourse flying
There is that death cannot claim.
Spirit lights that are undying
Shining on with brightening flame.
There is that escapes death's portal
Noble deed and thought sublime,
Memory holds these immortal
As the heritage of Time.

Pictured scenes that genius fashions
Lined upon time's lofty walls;
Hymns of tragic human passions
Echoing down her long drawn halls.
There in flaming light before us
Pageantries and splendors throng,
While with myriad world-voice chorus
March the centuries along.

We have seen these grandest visions
 Outlined by the Master hand;
Followed Music's high illusions
 Far up in celestial land.
As the two in epic story
 We stood on the mountain height,
Saw the grandeur and the glory
 Heaven unveils to mortal sight.

In that gorgeous panorama
 Up on drifting cloudland lined
There we witnessed mightiest drama
 That enlisted all mankind.
Heard celestial chorus voicing
 Triumph over Death and Fate
And in victory rejoicing
 At the Golden City Gate.

Music in the Realm of Feeling
 Its prophetic truths can teach,
From that farther world revealing
 What the mind can never reach.
Life's deep Mystery unveiling
 Where the Sense and Spirit merge,
She there speaks with voice unfailing
 From beyond Thought's farthest verge.

Thought and Reason halt at barrier
 That precludes their farther flight
Music there is dove-like carrier
 From the realms beyond our sight.
She—Religion's truths outlining
 Speaks her message unto men
And the Infinite divining
 Brings it down to mortal ken.

E'en where Wisdom falters blindly
At the questions Fate doth start,
Music there in voice more kindly
Gives an answer to the heart.
Earth's harsh dissonance resolving
In full harmony's accord.
Life in tonal march revolving
Back into Creation's Lord.

More than theologian's pages
Or than preaching aught could do
Music hath brought down the ages
Spirit of Religion true.
She—a broader Faith hath taught us
From all narrow limits freed
And the hymns that she hath brought us
Speak Christ's grander, nobler creed.

While the warring sects are fighting
Over some new doctrine craze
Music brings them all—uniting
In her common hymns of praise.
She thus forms a bond of union
Where they all are of one mind
In one Lord and one communion
That embraces all mankind.

Music's grandest inspiration
Seems the voice of God indeed,
Speaking forth His revelation
In one universal creed.
And beyond our sight's restriction
With prophetic forecast rife,
She doth bring a strong conviction
Of a future, nobler life.

So thru mist of Time emergent
 Hope casts forward broadening ray,
Showing life thru death resurgent—
 Waking into brighter day.
And thru all of nature's changes
 Progress still has upward trend
Mounting up in higher ranges
 With the Good for final end.

This instinct in every creature
 In its offspring would replace
Finer form and nobler feature
 Thus to mould a higher race.
Tho sunk low in degradation
 Parent love will e'er aspire
For its child, a higher station
 Lifting it from out the mire.

Tho all claim of goodness spurning
 Yet deep in the darkest heart
May be found a spark yet burning
 That new, better life would start.
Pride in offspring—never reaches
 That low, dark despairing mood
That this devil's creed it preaches
 “Evil—be thou their one good.”

This a saving grace discloses
 Evil from its mire of earth
Strives to bring forth beauty's roses
 And to higher life give birth.
Sin—its ugly self thus hating,
 Buries deep its canker worm,
And new life regenerating
 Would appear in nobler form.

Tho the taint hereditary
In the blood may leave its trace
Yet environment may bury
Much beneath its saving grace.
Wrong—e'er brings recrimination
With itself is oft at strife
Sin—its own elimination
Yields to nature's laws of life.

Sin— at length will find its wages
Tho—death be its final cure,
Thus—indeed thro out the ages
Only Truth and Right endure.
Error—tho backed by the thunders
Of war's loudest cannon blast
Marches on—in pitfall blunders
Leaving Truth to rule at last.

God's great mercy—its condonement
On the darkest sins can lay,
And repentance with atonement
Wash the stains of guilt away
Rendering world-life richer, finer
In the characters thus made,
Who stand forth in light diviner
From the dark background of shade.

Humbly Prodigal returning
Called forth father's love and care
More than envious brother burning
Jealously about his share.
Nobler aspirations stirring
Hearts thru evil sorely tried
Than those righteous, never erring
Mantled in their selfish pride.

When revenge and hatred perish
And all warring strife shall cease
Men may nobler feelings cherish
And live in the bonds of peace.
When all share life's toil and labor
Without caste or pride of birth
Each as himself love his neighbor,
Then the Christ shall rule on earth.

Strange—not intellect or Science
Can bring forth this nobler dream,
Nor can fond hope place reliance
On aught men may plan or scheme.
Lust of power and ambition
E'er have been a world-wide curse.
Tho they boast reforming mission
Yet they leave a nation worse.

Heart—not head must yield emotion
Giving progress living force
Sacrifice and love's devotion
Are the chief and fruitful source.
Love—that force that moves Creation
In new births to reappear
And works man's regeneration
Till he reach angelic sphere.

Love—that reaches thru Death's portal
Can old forms with new replace,
Thus to render Man immortal
In a never-ending race.
Love—when thus its consecration
Seeks in higher life to move
Is divinest emanation
From that Power—the God of Love.

So when love is pure and holy
Nor debased by instinct coarse,
This—e'en in the poor and lowly
Forms the world's uplifting force.
Love—repressing all the bestial
In a loftier sentiment
Shall uprise to sphere celestial
As life's highest sacrament.

E'er arises from such union
Fairer form and nobler mind
Till the human—its communion
With angelic race shall find.
So apocalyptic vision
Heaven and earth created new
Is no wild and strange illusion
But shall stand forth real and true.

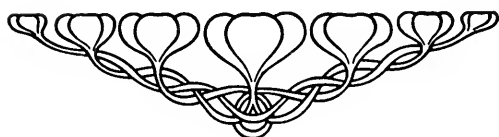
Unto this hope—bravely clinging
Follow we the gleam of light.
Time's grand revolutions bringing
Final triumph of the right.
As to Simeon—faith revealing
Christ—who should the world redeem,
We hold fast our faith—yet feeling
That it is no futile dream.

So, we sing our Nunc Dimittis
Thankful that the time and place
At our close of life, permit us
See the glory of our race.
And from that one grand presentment
We shall in the future live
Feeling too—that large contentment
Life gave highest it could give.

Thus without complaint or grieving,
March we, steadfast on our way
To night's shadow—still believing
It will ope in brighter day.
With this nobler consolation,
As our humbler paths we plod,
In the final consummation
Naught is great or small with God.

As some sad, sweet ritornello
Can the twilight echoes fill,
Autumn's voice low, rich and mellow
Keeps our lives in music still
Age is not a sore infliction
If well done be life's work,—then
To its kindly benediction
We respond heartfelt—"Amen."

So Philante—as we're starting
On the last stretch toward home,
Comes a voice this hope imparting
We shall thru death's twilight roam.
And beyond—with world-soul blending
In some life-form now unknown,
We shall join the march unending
Round the great white shining Throne.



Night Before Antietam

LOVE'S SENTINEL

TO night he promised to be here! 'Tis cloudy, chill and drear
Nor knows he of my ruined home—'twill give him little cheer
Kind nurse, bear with me, this lone watch! I must his coming wait—
And Hope's fond peradventure cast against uncertain Fate.

See, o'er the dusk horizon flashes forth a fitful glare,
They're battling by the valley bridge. Oh! is my Henry there?
If so, may God protect him still, and guide through this last fight
All safely,—yes my heart foretells,—he must be here to-night.

Ah! now it seems a broken dream,—how ere this war had come
In sunny days of luxury, I dwelt in this dear home.
'Twas in this room he told his love,—my Henry,—mine to be,
I loved him but too well,—he was the world and all to me.

But I was proud and wayward then, nor thought why he should stay
And silent, when the war called each brave gallant to the fray,
Gay chivalry's parade brought forth my sportive taunt to go,
Then stung as though by wounded pride,—he went,—but to the foe.

Could I recall those words, there by the porch that now is burned,
He started when I spoke,—one rueful look upon me turned,
Then knit his brow,—gave no goodby,—but silently rode away.
I called him,—weeping called in vain,—have called him to this day.

For still I love him, though he comes among the foeman throng
And they have burned my father's house,—he knows not of the wrong
For here his message bade me wait. This lantern gleam shall tell
That I stand bravely at my post,—love's last sad sentinel.

Ah! sharp and keen has been the change. This window once with flowers
Was trellissed, and its curtained light made dim the twilit hours
Together here we sat, to watch the fading day's last gleams,
While summer winds breathed music low, of lover's fondest dreams.

But now, these stones,—how rude and cold,—the bare walls of this room,
Roofed only by the clouds, and dark neath starless vault of gloom.
This broken, gaping casement, where the night wind chills my brow,
While I, 'mid ruins of my heart, await his coming now.

Ah! he will find me broken too,—the wreck of beauty's years.
These eyes too chill with their long watch;—too sad for grief or tears
A stricken heart, that only waits to fall upon his breast
To tell him all,—to be forgiven, and then to sink to rest.

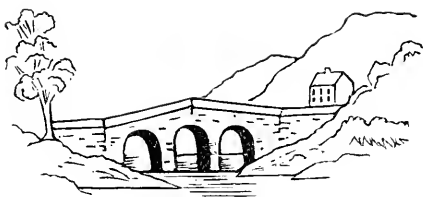
Nay, good, kind nurse, I yet must brave the night winds' chilling breath.
I here will wait him, though this watch be even unto death.
Hist! What is that? The sound of steps and voices down the hill
But silent now,—the night winds moan and echo,—all is still.

The flashes cease down by the bridge. The weary fight is done.
Retreating now, more distant booms the sound of random gun
I hear slow measured footsteps near. There comes a torch-lit train.
Go, meet them, find if friend or foe, while I here will remain.

Alone in this dim lantern glow,—a spectre hovers near
Yet will I bravely hold my heart against foreboding fear.
Why halt they there with whispering low,—fear they some ambush troop
Aye some dark mystery seems to lurk in that close-muffled group.

What is it that you bring, good friend? A wounded man you say
Why hold your words from me? No, no, I will not come away
I too am used to war's sad scenes,—in these I've borne full share
But why is he brought here unto this ruin bleak and bare?

"A comrade's dying prayer, that his last sleep be in this place
To-night" how strange! Here I must look. O God, my Henry's face.
Dead! Dead! And yet he came at last. O lips so calm, so cold
And still,—no need that you should speak. Your story is well told.



ANTIETAM

ALONG Time's highway Peace rears wall and arch
That stand unknown to history or fame,
Until fierce War thereon in blazing march
Enlines his tragedies in blood and flame.

As pictures quaint, from olden annals, gleam
The Roman arches of Antietam bridge,
Whereon the roadway vaults o'er wandering stream
Beneath the shadow of the mountain ridge.

Sequestered from the noisy, bustling world
Through peaceful ages slept this lonely scene,
Till that loud morn when flame fringed armies hurled
War's thunderbolts across the deep ravine.

Northman and Southron met, as oft before
Dark cloudland's angry hosts, in conflict warm,
With volleying thunders clashed in struggle o'er
This borderland of sunshine and of storm.

And ever, rushing from the sterner zone
The Northwind swept the torn, thinned ranks away;
Anon—the Southern sunlight brighter shone
And o'er the field resumed its milder sway.

But from that morning's hurtling tempest came
No freshening shower to swell the streamlet's flood
Beneath its scorching canopy of flame
A ghastly torrent poured—of human blood.

For thousands here upon this altar laid
Their lives in noble, generous sacrifice;
"Not for themselves, but for their country," paid
Its liberty and union's costly price.

Nor died they vainly. Their devotion brave
With rigid grasp in death's tense, nervedrawn hand
Upheld the flag that still should grandly wave
Wide o'er a free and firm united hand.

The granite sentinel here stands at rest,
From whose stone lips speak forth his comrades all
How youth, ambition, wealth, e'en love's fond quest
Were sacrificed unto their country's call.

Aye—not for conquest—nor for sordid gain
They rose to arms. With duty's stern, sad face
And iron will they fought to break the chain
That galled their kindred more than alien race.

When victory came the sword was gladly sheathed,
Their wayward brethren were brought home once more
And given the larger liberty they breathed
With welcome full the old ties to restore.

Knighthood drew never more chivalric sword
Or fought a nobler strife in Christ's fair name.
Than these strong hearts who here their blood outpoured,
The foe from his own thraldom to reclaim.

No sculptured shrine neath minster's vaulted nave
Emblazoned proud with famed armorial crest
Holds nobler dust than each green-mantled grave
Wherein the ashes of these heroes rest.

Their temple here—the vault of azure sky,
Endomes the pillared mountains far around
This chancelled mound wherein they buried lie
Is God's high altar—this is hallowed ground.

Neath forest cloisters, here the marble script
With plain memorial speaks each hero name
As eloquent as in cathedral crypt
Proud mausoleum flaunts a warrior's fame.

Morn, through high chancel window o'er yon crest
Across these columned aisles lay earliest beam,
Here through cloud-oriel in the far-walled west
The last red splendors of the sunset stream.

The pageantries of cloudland o'er them sweep
With changing scenes of grandeur or of gloom,
The sentinels of night's star-marches keep
High vigil o'er each consecrated tomb.

Betimes the Northwind through the forest moans
Heroic dirge for these departed souls,
And grand cloud-organ oft in thunder tones
Along heaven's vault their glory's anthem rolls.

Beneath the blazoned, star-gemmed canopy
Where history lines her scenes and deeds sublime
They stand enmarshalled in death's panoply
A bold relief upon the walls of Time.

To them a nation here its tribute pays
And o'er their graves enwreathes the laurel crown,
Resounds their glory—till the notes of praise
Fill the long aisles with echoes of renown.

Repairing here, devoted hands refill
The sacramental lamp before their shrine
That fire of patriotism from this hill
A Light Eternal to the world shall shine.

So gathered now—we stand with reverence due
In battle-storied aisles where heroes trod,
Around these hallowed altars—to renew
Our faith in our own country and our God.

CHIVALRY'S LAST ONSET

NO sea of braver life e'er rolled abreast
An iron wall-trenched foe in storming flood,
Than here on Gettysburg's flame-mantled crest
Dashed high-tide mark in spray of fire and blood.

Virginia's noblest sons, they followed too
The light that God had given them to see
Martyrs unto their faith were they, and true
To country, home, and to their ancestry,

Bred to old-fashioned virtues, far too proud
To stoop and struggle in ignoble strife
To push amongst the hustling, dusty crowd
On gilded avenues of modern life.

Where drudging toil, and sharpest schemes of trade
With Mammon's gospel of hard-grasping greed
Seemed, only progress on a downward grade
And all subversive of their nobler creed.

The brave old days of Knighthood, shone to them
The radiant mirage of a longing dream
Yet, drifting farther off, they fain would stem
Its current and turn back time's rushing stream.

So fought they to restore chivalric past
And fading splendors of the Romaunt age
But fate her Domesday Book had closed hardfast
Ne'er to revert to that enamoured page.

Alas! for those whom fond old faith arrays
Athwart the great Time-Spirit's onward course
Who don the armor of the brave old days
'Gainst new-world enginery's gigantic force,

To fight for that wan glory that will cling
'Round ruined shrines of their ancestral pride
Vain struggle, as for some lone banished king
Swept from his realm by revolution's tide.

Yet, for a time victorious; lured afar
They fain would force their foe in final fight
From his last bulwark. O'er it shone the star
Of triumph, brilliant to their hopeful sight.

But on that battle's dark horizon rim
Strange spectral faces peered through smoke-blurred air
Of stern old Ironsides, and Cromwell grim
'Neath dark-clenched brow shot forth blood-curdling glare.

While Hampden's dauntless spirit steeled each soul
Firm as the granite flint of Plymouth Rock
They, though the fiery surge above them roll
Would hold hardup against Doom's final shock.

All in high hope, the sons of Cavaliers
Dashed on with Rupert's wildfire, fiercely burned
To wreak a long revenge for olden years
When England's throne and pride were overturned.

Two centuries were crowded in that hour
The world upon its issue stood aghast,
Lest Liberty's high western lighthouse tower,
Hope's lamp to nations, go down in the blast.

The tragedy's grand crisis, this world-fight
While fate hung trembling o'er the flamelit scene
The moment now when from their cloudland height
The Immortal Powers must come and intervene.

For, if that fiery torrent be not checked
It must tear through the world's broad-beaten track
For human freedom, progress—all be wrecked
And century's dial hands turned ages back.

Resistless, seemed that fierce tornado's ire
All on the flame-swept hill must yield and go,
But then, from hundred cannon lips of fire
The voice of God Almighty thundered "No!"

And in the blast of His destroying breath
The iron ranks of war from earth were lift
Into hot furnace of red molten death
Into a maelstrom swirl of wreck and drift.

Yea, they reached and struck their foe, a few
Stood 'mid the heaps of unreturning brave
Shocked in bewilderment, nor then they knew
That red volcanic gorge their nation's grave.

Ah! tears for them, our brethren torn and shred
Upon that field, time's saddest holocaust.
Misguided? Peradventure! Be it said
They bravely fought against the stars—and lost.

And he, their leader, felt the fatal stroke
Yet gave no sign, the noblest Roman there,
A phantom rose up o'er the battle's smoke
And fixed on him its glance of pale despair.

Pointing with spectral hand to distant plain
Where with a remnant wan and worn of all
His vanished legions, they should meet again
And o'er the closing scene the curtain fall.

Aye yes, o'er sunset of a nation's hope
He must have seen the Southern Cross go down
In that dark eve, while o'er the crimsoned slope
A dim aurora, rose the Northern crown.

* * * * *

BUT they who stood that shock, strong-souled and brave
When hell from gates wide-open burst aflame
Upon that thunder-shaken hill,—there gave
Themselves unto a death of deathless fame.

Not for their own, their nobler fight to give
Glad Freedom's boon to race of humbler birth,
That manhood's right by manhood's might should live
And perish not from off the face of earth.

They stand emblazoned in Eternal light
Which shines as brightly here as ever shone
Across the ages from the templed height
That crowns the immortalled plain of Marathon.

LINCOLN

IS nobler strength grew in life's humbler walks,
As ever in low vale by wavelet's side,
The trees rise grander than the puny stalks
That flourish on the arid heights of pride.

* * * * *

From out the dark unknown, he towering came
Amongst the sons of men,—a giant form.
He worked God's will, accomplished his high aim,
Then strangely passed away with conflict's storm.

His star appeared o'er dim twilit frontier,
Where rude, heroic age still shadowed earth;
There rugged, danger-haunted home must rear
This child of destiny, from humblest birth.

The light that learning's templed hill adorns
Lumed not his path through boyhood's struggling years;
He needs must climb a road beset with thorns,
Of penury, and dimmed through sorrow's tears.

Yet Nature's heart into his own could pour
A learning deeper than the formal schools,
And at her fountain source, he drank a lore
Transcending all scholastic arts and rules.

And when he voiced time's onward march, he warmed
With eloquence the age must heed and follow;
In him, it seemed, the rustic Pan had formed
'Neath guise uncouth, the soul of an Apollo,—

Yet grander,—as in low, dark Nibelheim
Manhood's strong brand was forged by Siegfried's youth;
He wrought, to strike the dragons of his time,
The sun god's arrows into sword of truth.

So when the hour for champion loudly called,
And cast before him its herculean gage;
With giant stride, while others shrank appalled,
He bravely stepped to forefront of the age.

As leader, summoned by the people's voice
When war's black storm-clouds overspread the land,
He was raised up, and by the Almighty's choice,
World destinies were placed in his strong hand.

Time's crisis, and this nation in the van
On firing line, must hold brave to the mark.
Flinch not, but fight unto the death, lest man
And progress fall back into ages dark.

A wild, dark hour—a nation in despair
Was plunged down in a depth of weltering gloom.
Distracted prophets cried: "Lo here! Lo there!"
And waited tensely for the crack of doom.

Chimeras shrieked. Wild flying Furies hurled
Their firebrands. Reared the Sphinx with awful frown
And Fate's demand. Behind, the maelstrom whirled
With eager maw, the shipwrecked state to drown.

With silent mien he faced the driving storm
Where God gave him to see faint light of hope
He gathered strength, his battle line to form
For struggling march up steep ascending slope.

To bring forth order from confusion dire,
To save the state by treason undermined,
To roll back angry sea of surging fire,
And hold highway for progress of mankind.—

He toiled heroic, ere he bore the brunt
And braced the torrent back, of wild retreat.
His spirit broadening with occasion's front,
Was ne'er o'er-reached or downcast in defeat.

While others shrank from conflict's adverse shock
To give up all as lost,—a brave, strong tower,
With foothold firmly planted on truth's rock,
He steadfast stood throughout the darkest hour.

Beneath the saddened grandeur of his brow,
Grief-burdened by the blood and treasure cost,
Glanced stern resolve, that no surrender now
Should yield and own the cause of freedom lost.

Taller than others—his high vision peered
O'er clouds that blinded their dim, groping sight;
With stronger faith in God, he never feared
For final triumph of the truth and right.

No thought of self—his course he ever bore
As one whose heart a larger aim controls.
With god-like patience he, though wounded sore,
O'erlooked the taunts and frets of smaller souls.

And though he towered o'er all, he ever yet
His home-bred virtues wore with mantling grace;
Unlike the proud, who on their heights forget
The garb and morals of their humbler place.

Onward and upward he, undaunted, pressed
To that far height—his faith saw there unfurled
Freedom's victorious standard, from that crest
To herald a new morning to the world.

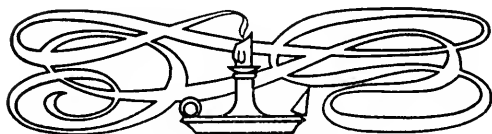
There, far in front,—war-weary—pallid browed,—
A shining mark for one last bolt of wrath
That shot from rack of night's retreating cloud
To make his breast, its blinding, scorching path.

Why should remorseless Fate have so decreed
His fall, there under glory's zenith star?
Was it God's will, that thus a maniac deed
The highest, holiest hopes of man should mar?

Strange echo. On the far horizon loomed
From aeons past,—the mirage of a crime
That Calvary's hill in noontide night engloomed
And make this day the darkest of all time.

Stricken, he fell not,—his colossal shade
Stood on that mountain crest, around him drawn
Death's mantling pall,—yet he appeared to fade
Not into darkness,—but in brighter dawn.

So crowned by Death and Morning light, he passed
Transfigured, on through cloudland's shining portals,
To Fame's Elysian fields,—Time's noblest—last,—
He walks serenely there with the Immortals.



The Vision of the Alchemist

NOT in monastic habit clad,—or cramped
'Neath cloisters of dim medieval age,
But in the shadow aisles of forest wild
In new-found western world he lived,—and erst
As freedom's fire armed propagandist, preached
Her gospel to the world with cannon's voice
Bravely he fought through the long years that tried
The souls of men,—at last with victory crowned
He breathed the glad, fresh air of liberty.
He turned to arts of peace, here to rebuild
Wars ruins. Soon his mission stood at hand
Appointed by the powers that ruled the land,
Master of commerce on the noble stream.
That rose afar neath sunset's golden gleam
He gave his soul and all his powers to find
A highway here for progress of mankind.

Upon the rude craft of his realm, he saw
Men with their puny strength, as galley slaves
With rudest implements of barbarous age
Striving 'gainst Nature's wild untoward force,
Alas for those, whom toiling drudgery
Degraded thus from every nobler sphere
What liberty—what hope for these sad serfs
Of Tyrant Nature. But perchance her yoke
Would break, and her vast power change its course
Instead of hindrance—into helpful force.

He stood upon the long blue mountain crest
And saw the Sun god at the Orient gates
Piercing the waters with his shafts of light,
And with his trident heaping piles of mist

Upon the wide wings of warm austral winds
Then drifting o'er the azure sea aloft
This cloudland fleet its crystal freight would bear
Unto the blue shores of the western hills,
Unloading there, adown the purple slopes
The waters rushed to their sea-home again
With that wild force that mocked the strength of men.

Might he not find the secret of the birth
Of this great motive force, in Nature's crypt.
Alike the Rosicrucian old, he fused
Strange elements together. Demon Fire,
He joined in union with the Water Sprite,
When from their marriage rose in sylphlike form
A Genie mightier than all living strength
That man had harnessed. Patient ox or horse
That bore his burdens—ploughed his rugged fields
Were naught compared with this wild energy
Born of an union of the elements,
Water and Fire. But futile was the dream
As the chimera of old Alchemist
To bridle this fierce force, and bid it stand
Docile and curbed to man's directing hand.

Yet life for him was wrapped in that wild dream
Wildered somnambulist, to whom the day
Became a moonlight dim. Retiring here
From busy world that mocked at his wild quest
He sought a lonely walk upon the shore
Of this romantic river, where of late
The savage hunted, warred, and marked his name
Potomac on its stream, then vanishing
As spirit roaming through the sunset winds
Had fled adown the world's far western slope—
Here he indulged in this secluded walk
His mazy dreams of future empire built
On the wide wastes of this untraversed land
By genii he should summon with his lamp
While to the homespun village, he appeared
A moonstruck madman flitting back and forth

Chasing a will-o-wisp,—a Jack-o-dreams
Dwelling apart, as in a dreamland world
Yet e'er the unexpected starts to front,
And wildest vision ne'er such change outlined
As his moon-madness brought amongst mankind.

One evening late he lingered on the cliff,
The sun's last level rays were laid across
The earth's receding verge, and upward glanced
In prism colors, purple, red and gold
On the cloud curtain closing o'er the day,
Long strata mists in sea of amethyst
Stretched wide and far. Above them grandly rose
Tall cumuli, in land and continent
Piling to mountain height, all roseate
In gold and orange light, while o'er their crest
The wisps of cirri waved their crimson flags,
A cloudland panorama that slow moved
Across horizon of the sunset clime
In its flamboyant pageantry, he traced
His fond Utopia of the future. There
The gleaming course of Empire, blazed the west
With splendors of the Orient's drowsy dreams.
Cities loomed up with towers and spires, more grand
Than those piled on the heights of Romaunt land
Between them on wide reach of shelving slope
Chariots of fire flew on their iron path
O'er river wide—through mountains rock-ribbed ridge
Swifter than pinions of the free, wild wind.
The ocean main was ploughed in furrows deep
By huge fire-panting monsters driven by men.
Even the sea's inreaching arms were bound
By the steel bracelets he had bridged there o'er
Man's final conquest over Nature's powers
Should make millennial Empire through the world
This was the vision to his sight unfurled.

The roseate glow of hope warmed his lone heart
Aye, if indeed his Genii bring such store
Of blessings to mankind,—the promised age

When waste of warring strife and want should cease
And penury no longer chill their souls,
Then all the sons of toil, their hands should lift
In benediction for his golden gift.

The sunset faded—soon in broad-winged flight
Darkness came up the river vale and gloomed
Wide o'er the lowlands—still the aureal glow
Gilded the purple peaks along the west
And still his eye clung to that roseate dream
Down to the last far point of vanishing.
But now the picture turned a darker side
And in the dewy dusk and starlight chill
There whispered sadder voices of the Night
“Alas, the glory of that coming age
Gilds its high places only, underneath
Darkness and gloom still overcast the world
Yea, this vast Power that thou shalt bring to earth
The strong armed daughter of the Flood and Fire
Alike the deities of old shall grant
Her favors unto Fortune's chosen few,
Time's same old story. God's free gifts to all
Usurped by stronger hands, who build thereby
A despot's throne above their fellow man
And coin sad labor's toil and tears and throes
In golden heaps to flaunt their luxury.
Empire of peace. Aye, ruled by giant Wrong!
This new world grown in one vast enginery
Grinding the poor to feed the idle rich
Thou, who so fiercely fought an alien King
Is this such golden age as thou would'st bring?”

What baleful cry of doubt and gloom am I?
Nay, not the Lorely's luring voice that sings
From the bright shorelands of the evening clouds
I—am the Spirit of the Northern Light,
Speaking in wisdom's calmer, clearer tone
Behold the golden wavelets from the zone
Dancing in fitful flight amongst the stars
Yet all the while one low sad arch of gloom

Remains beneath unbroken.—Therein find
True picture of the coming age outlined.”

“Yea, Fortune’s bright auroras still shall flit
Above the world’s high places, while beneath
In the smoke-mantled city of dark Dis
Are crowded Labor’s myriads, forging there
By fires of hatred—one red cone atop
Tells of the reeking, seething caldron hid beneath
Waiting till some volcanic throe shall crack
Its prison walls, then shall it burst its bars
And cast its baleful bloodfire to the stars.”

Startled—he paused. Could this be true, and he,
So hopeful, toiling for his fellowman
Through long, untoward years, on them at last
Instead of blessing, bring a baneful curse?
Yet, as the gods cannot recall their gifts
Though doubt and gloom around him wrapped their clouds
And in blind mazes of the world, his path
Was lost,—mutely impelled upon his way
By primal purpose, though the goal were gone
He worked on at his self-allotted task
Hoping that good might be the final end.
So when the wild chimeras of his brain
Were cast in earthly mould, began to work
The wonders of new era,—o’er the sea
Unto earth’s central point the recluse came
To show his miracles. In splendor’s hall,
Before a gathered glittering throng he stood
Evangelist of new industrial age
Whose Midas touch should turn the world to gold
Yet ere he spake, a dark form closed its hand
Upon his vision, then he knew the shade
That bade him pause, now here at last had come
In hour of triumph thus to call him home.
Stricken was he, and speechless, there he sank
In folding arms of silence, whose dark shroud
Closed in upon his life and dreams, alike
The curtain o’er a tragedy—meanwhile
The high-strung heart in his old soldier breast
Throbbled its last drumbeat for the long night’s rest.

Not Far From Home

THE glowlight on the sunset crest
Grows fainter in the fading west
And weary with a life's long roam.
My journey's end I now can see
With longing eyes—and glad to be
Not far from home.

The history of toiling years
The pages stained with sorrow's tears
Now end life's closing tome.
I long for rest—these words impart
A sweetness unto weary heart
Not far from home.

Ah—when youth started on the race
With high ambition—clear could trace
The glittering spires and gilded dome
Where it should reach—then all it dreamed
Was near and life's fulfillment seemed
Not far from home.

But adverse winds afar have blown
Hope's fairy fleet—now wrecked and strewn
Beneath wide ocean's surging foam.
Yet grief hath settled into calm
The loss seems less now that I am
Not far from home.

So weary heart, now failing fast
Take courage—hold brave to the last
Our path is short thru twilight gloam.
Life's sun hath set—but evening star
Will guide our last few steps. We are
Not far from home.

A Twilight Dream

ON shore of twilight's glimmering sea
My vineclad porch stands vacant,—lonely.
Friends—years have fled, here leaving only
The silent moon and me.

And peering thru the thickening haze
Like veil on fading picture falling
I listen—and hear voices calling
Back unto youthful days.

Then thru the gloaming, zephyr-fanned
Comes soft Eolian music streaming.
Sweet lullaby—I fall to dreaming
Of youth and Morningland.

And age forgets its wintry years
Around—'mid flowers of springtime blooming
Are long lost friends—the ties resuming
That memory endears.

All in the flush of youth restored.
Long time I live in that fond vision
That gives more joy—tho an illusion
Than real life can afford.

O world of dreams—so fond and fair
That thus fulfills the heart's strange yearning
Ah! could I—ne'er to day returning
Remain forever there.

But then a hoyden autumn wind
Among sear leaves makes rustling flurry
Dream pageantry in bustling hurry
Flies leaving naught behind.

I wake to dreariest vacancy.
Alas that dream, by rude touch shaken
Should break—and leave there all forsaken
The lonely moon and me.

Nelson's Death

“I Have lived for England's glory. I have winged her mightiest foe,
Banished fears of fierce invasion, by Trafalgar's crushing blow.
Now I answer death's last roll call—‘Here!’ in front of duty's line
Give my life unto my country—and my soul to God resign.”

Then grew noise and shouts of battle—far and faint to dying ears.
Once more in his childhood wandering—mother's kindly voice he hears.
But no tender arms of woman, and no softer lips were nigh
When he sighed for love's last token, “Kiss me, Hardy, ere I die!”

Aye—the bravest are the tenderest, and love's tones more strongly thrill
Than the battles bellowing thunders—and alarums loud and shrill
And as swan song floating over victory's exultant cry
Sounds the voice of dying hero.—“Kiss me, Hardy, ere I die!”

The Maple Avenue

I

A DOWN the lonely tree-lined path, with lingering step he passed,
And disappeared in twilight haze, no backward look he cast.
A parting sad and sadder yet, as fate did not foretell
That he should ne'er return,—this was our last unkind farewell.

For we had long been lovers true;—all thru our years of youth
Nor either yet could ever doubt the other's faith and truth,
But this eve an intrusion came, a strangely variant theme
That broken with harsh discordant note, the music of love's dream.

My fault it must have been,—a taunt that came from silly pride
Then have I suffered for that word, that drove him from my side.
Ah me! how slight a turn in path could send us far apart
To leave me go thru life alone, with wounded, broken heart.

II

At first I took it lightly, thinking others I should find.
But now I've learned the lesson sad; but one of human kind
Can be the true love ideal,—so years on years have flown
And no heart ever came to fill the vacance in mine own.

Then tidings from far country told of his untoward fate
Perchance he wandered blindly forth, nor shunned the dark, chill gate,
Yet sent last token of his faith, with message dear and fond
That he should never cease to love, e'en in the dark beyond.

I kissed his token, and I felt therein grief's freshening start
That with it came a marriage bond, not even death could part.
And o'er my weary, waning life, a shadow hand then crossed
To bind a not unwilling soul unto the loved and lost.

III

So thru the long and tiresome years, I've watched from this lone place
As down that long pathway at eve, his loved form I can trace,
Till in the gathering twilight gloom—all shadows slowly merge
And love's fond vision sinks away—as o'er dark ocean verge.

I peer into that gloom, until my eyes grow dim and blind
With tears and saddened memories, as there they seek to find
Some glinting hope that in a world beyond that veil of mist
Shall love meet its fulfillment in one final, lasting tryst.

My weary watch will end, when on a not far distant eve
From this sad place of parting I shall take my last long leave.
Then down that avenue will go two shadows hand in hand
And disappear for e'er and aye—in silent Shadowland.



Nachtlied

FROM weary world march, Lord our steps remanding
 For evening rest within Thy temple walls,
 Here may the peace that passeth understanding
 Descend upon us as night shadow falls.

Thy word of promise firm our faith maintaineth
 Though dark 'neath driving storm our pathway be,
 Beyond these trials, yet a rest remaineth
 For all thy people gathered home to Thee.

Toward that goal of peace our lives are wending
 By star gleam led, as wanderers of the night.
 O grant at last our life march bravely ending
 Death's morn shall bring us Thine eternal light.

* * * * *

Q O—changeful love,—since we
 must part
 So be it;—yet one kindness,
 Take thou its vision, leave my heart
 To utter blindness.

Rather the alien sense were lost
 Its hopeless use forsaking,
 If all it brings me, be at cost
 Of sad heart breaking.

Yet not all joys shall go with thee
 Some shall remain, redoubled,
 My music's airy flight shall be
 By thee untroubled.

Perchance, as fortune gives the blind
 The audient sense completer,
 I listening in the dark may find
 Life's music sweeter.

THE instrument beneath her hand
 Grew weirdly fascinating
 Eolian chords, by zephyrs fanned.
 Came from the far-off fairyland
 Reverberating.

As image of Madonna fair
 Engraved on cameo-relic
 She seemed—her wealth of waving
 hair
 Bound back—and falling gave an air
 And touch angelic.

She sang—her voice with music's art
 Thrilled deepest chords of feeling
 Could from its deep recesses start
 Love's memories unto the heart
 Their loss revealing.

There listening he—whose life so long
 By love had been forsaken.
 Would fain forget his sorrow's wrong
 To sink in dreamland of her song
 And—never waken.

Beside The Altar

WHEN he stood beside the altar,
My own hero, blithe and brave,
Did his manly voice then falter
When his pledge of love he gave?
Nay—tho spectre there was standing
That high hour of hope to mar,
With weird whisper him remanding
To the cruel chance of war.

For he knew he must be starting
To the morrow's battle plain.
Ah! our bridal was our parting,
So, we never met again.
Fate's dread hand reached forth to greet him;
My fond prayers were all in vain;
By the bridge of sad Antietam
There he fell among the slain.

They may tell in song and story,
How in honor's front he died;
But for me grief blinds the glory,
Leaving me Death's mourning bride.
Though upon fame's marble pillow
Here he rests, yet rue shall twine
With the laurel, and the willow
Grow above his grave and mine.

The Angelus

RING on! ring on! sweet evening bells,
The vibrant air with music swells
While red watch-fires of sunset burn
To light, the wanderer's long return.
Ring—o'er these calm, deep waters come
Your well-known sounds, sweet bells of home
In listening trance, once more I stand
On threshold of youth's morningland,
Ring on sweet angelus!

Ring on! the air more tender gleams
With shimmering tones, and youth's bright dreams
As fleet from shore of far-off times
Float back on wavelets of your chimes.
Childhood's high voices ring full glad
In undertone, sweet, low and sad
A mother sings her lullaby;
Dear sounds, whose memories never die.
Ring on sweet angelus!

Ring on; ring ever, evening bells,
Your sound a sweeter music tells
Than wind harp from the elfin shore;
I fain would listen evermore.
O do not cease,—the sunset clime
Makes crimson echo to your chime;
Nor yet the vesper star doth bring
The closing hush of eve—O ring,
Ring on sweet Angelus.

Dieu Seul Est Grand

LE Roi est mort! Vive le Roi! Louis the Monarch Grand
Slow sinking as a ruined tower in wan decadent land
In late sunset of age, from world of fading glory past
Down into shadow-shrouded realm, where kings must come at last.

In regal state, by high cathedral altar lay the pall
With splendor's retinue, flamboyant heraldry, and all
The muffled pomp of death was there,—the dark slow-waving plume
While drooping flags and banner folds o'erhung the crimson gloom.

In sombre mood and sables clad, there stood court-haunting crowd
That ever comes when Death invades threshold of palace proud
Yet homelike love's affection brought no heartfelt grief or tear
And sorrow lay no wreath upon that gorgeous pall draped bier.

There music's pageant fanfare must its wonted incense raise
E'en through the mournful requiem, the trumpet blare his praise
Then Massillon, the orator, his memory should crown
With laud and laurels, till those arches ring with his renown.

Long time, bent o'er the mighty dead, he stood with lips unclosed
As though Death's majesty its ban of silence had imposed
Then rising, o'er the king whose pride made boast, "I am the State"
His voice thrilled through the awe-struck stillness. "God alone is great."

Appomattox

A BRILLIANT SCENE—that night of the surrender
Around my board, the Northern leaders sate,
Assembled there to duly celebrate
With feast and wine, with speech and story,
Their victory in fitting style and splendor;
Recount the war—its shadows and its glory.
But one beside my hearth there sat, apart,
And gazed into the fire. He had no heart
For triumph, or to be elate and cheery.
Some orderly I deemed, too tired and weary
To join the exultant joy. When, rising up
Unmindful of the feast or flowing cup,
He asked of me the way out to the spring.
So tired, my pity said; “Sir, let me bring
You water.” “No, I serve myself,” he said.
Thus bidden, I through hallway led;
No word he spake. I pointed to the place.
Returning “Thanks,” was his short heartfelt grace

It chanced, my youngest girl through hallway ran,
When in his outstretched arms this silent man
Caught her in fond embrace. “My little dear!”
He said, and kissed her with an earnest kiss.
“A father’s love be my excuse for this
My own dear little girl all this long year
I have not seen, but home I soon shall go.
Thank God, my work is done.” Such was his plea
“Where is your home? I fain would know!
“Galena, Illinois!” “And what might be
Your name?” “Grant!” curtly answered he.

He passed on, leaving me there in my hall
Bestruck with wonderment and stupified.
My little girl asked whispering aside:
"Who was it pa?" "The greatest of them all;
That was the General Grant who now commands
Their armies and our own—who swept our lands
With fire and sword—his were the hands
That held you, while he kissed you here."
"No papa, sure, he was too fond and dear,
No warrior fierce, but gentle, kind and true.
He took me for his little girl, I knew
And answered to her part—I kissed him too."

Thus, while his name and fame flashed round the earth
That night, with victory's flags above him streaming,
This noblest soldier sat by lonely hearth—
Of home—love—wife and children, fondly dreaming.



Veni Emanuel

Ⓞ Come Emanuel, from the realm
Where light is born Thy legions bring
The hosts of darkness overwhelm
Victorious reign—Messiah! King!
The world spreads wide her orient gates
And on Thy glorious entrance waits
O Come Emanuel.

Come crowned with morning light and youth
Illume with fresher hope and life
The hearts of those who for Thy truth
Endured long weary night of strife
Whose faith held firm through darkest fight
In final triumph of the right
O Come Emanuel.

O Come, reclaim Thine heritage
Make desert bloom in verdant clime
Bring on the promised golden age
Foreseen from far off peaks of time
When earth shall be Thy glorious throne
Its Kingdoms, nations, all Thine own
O Come Emanuel.

St. John XIV

NOT as the world giveth, give I unto you
Nor pleasure with flowers your pathway shall strew
Nor glory her chaplet of laurel shall weave
But gifts than these greater, ye all may receive.

The hero's endurance,—the brave, earnest soul
That tempter can move not, nor Fate can control.
That holds fast, unmindful what Fortune may bring,
Aye this is far grander than glory of King.

The world may not love you, yet do not complain
I've worn its chill mantle of scorn and disdain
I live and die for you. No man hath e'er shown
A love than this greater—to die for his own.

Be not your hearts troubled—my love be your guard
And my righteous Kingdom your final reward.
Fear not I am with you, and in you shall live
And my peace I give you, that worlds cannot give.

De Profundis

ON damp, dark earthfloor of a basement lay
A poor old rootlet, worthless, castaway.
Yet from its weak blind eyes frail tendrils grew,
And upward thro the long dark void they threw
Weak tender arms of pallid trembling hope.
(As those sad souls who down in darkness grope,
And fain would rise from their repressing gloom
Up into regions of sunlight and bloom.)
So climbed they upward; till they found at last
The window opening,—thro' its bars they passed
Out into sunshine, there in green and gold
Fair as the lilies, leaves and flowers unfold
In nature's living colors, that can bring
More joy to eye and heart, than gorgeous raiment of a King.

Poor old neglected rootlet, your blind reach
Out of the darkness, doth its moral preach
To all that would read nature's truths aright.
Teaches that dark, foul earth may form the womb
To give birth to the brilliant rose's bloom.
No life so hopeless, of such lowly plight
But that it may grow up and so fulfill
Its mission destined in Creation's will.
Hope to the lowly—though poor, rude and coarse
Yet when they feel within their hearts, the force
That should burst forth in some diviner flight,
Let them reach up and outward to the light.

Abendlied

TWILIGHT of Sabbath evening—holy calm
Breathes over all the world a restful balm.
Ring Vesper bell, and from day's garish roam
Recall the wanderer to religion's home.

To come herein, where dusk of gloaming falls
In shadow pictures on the sacred walls;
Where aureoled saints the darkling panes illumine
And angel faces haunt the roseate gloom.

Here lift thy soul in higher realm of life
Above earth's coarser toil and jarring strife.
Before this shrine unload thy grief and care
To breathe the longings of thy silent prayers

Then may the music, as from angel choir
With ecstasy, thy listening heart inspire,
To feel as its sweet cadences shall cease
The benediction of eternal peace.

In the Morning

COME friends! let us sing tho' the night grows late
Sing we of youth and of morning.
We'll turn back the hands on the dial plate
Time and his record suborning.
Here gathered once more, near the dark river shore
Our old comrade circle re-forming
The songs that were sung when life's day was young
Shall gladden our hearts, till the morning.

Sing cheerily aii,—while our life's rolling tide
Back to shorelands of youth is now turning,
We'll strike the brave notes of our manhood pride
Though our candles be short and low burning.
Let the moment forget old age and regret,
The weight of our burdens now scorning,
Sing, boldly and strong,—it may be our swan-song
The last we shall sing,—till the morning.

Dear friends,—who in Shadowland far have withdrawn
Gone—to the Isle of the Morning.
In lonely Twilight, we are wandering on
Weary, awaiting Fate's warning.
Yet the starlight of hope, gilds the orient slope
Where life's day shall have a reborning
So let the night come and gather us home,
All—will be there—in the morning!

All Soul's Eve

I

DISMANTLED are the forest choirs of spring
The woodland aisles are draped in foliage sere
Where thro' the moaning winds of Autumn sing
A plaintive farewell to the passing year.

Along the minster's vaulted nave, now dim
With funeral lights the muffled organ rolls
Its sombre tones, while voices chant the hymn
Of rest for all the year's departed souls.

II

For Sisters Spring and Summer that are past
The rich toned Autumn's mistveiled eyes now weep,
And withered leaves as falling tears are cast
Upon the mounds where all their flowers sleep.

Thou, who hast buried loves, take blooming wreaths
And strew them on the graves where thou dost grieve.
'Tis Memory's hour, while voice of Nature breathes
The tender requiem of All Soul's Eve.

A Nation's Hymn

Land, by our fathers sought afar
Braving the stormy, wild ocean
To come and plant neath Vesper star
Altars for Faith's devotion
Where God should reign in Truth and Right
A New-world realm created
To Freedom consecrated
Whose herald star ascendant
Should rise and shine, a beacon light
To foreign shores resplendent.
That here, their chosen races come
To rear new towers of Christendom.

O Land, may war-cloud ne'er invade
Field of thy star-lighted splendor,
May Liberty never be betrayed
Nor unto foe surrender;
This nation be her champion bold
E'en tho' her last defender
A hostile world defying,
On God's strong arm relying
That Freedom's flaming torch here hold
Light unto ages undying
Her glad Evangel hence resound
Far unto Earth's remotest bound.

While fiery Mars flames o'er th'old world
Its hosts in conflict clashing,
Time-honored realms in ruin hurled
Their towers and thrones down crashing
May thy star shine in peaceful skies
Thru constellations waning,
A fuller radiance gaining.

And here on new foundations
May grander world and day arise
O'er the Twilight Dusk of nations,
Their ruin wrought by jealous rage
Brings thee to forefront of the age.

Conquest nor Empire be thine aim
Vaunting victorious legions,
But founding Justice in God's name
Far thru benighted regions.
That all to Golden Age attain
When 'War, his hosts disbanding
And Olive branch expanding
Shall wave wide o'er the nations.
So Righteousness and Peace shall reign
Throughout all generations,
When every land their sway shall own
And Earth become God's shining throne.

Renunciation

A H, yes, my friend, full well I know
The steep path up the mountain side
To dry, chill heights of fame and pride
Where laurels grow.

But none for me, with weary feet
I'll seek the lowly vale and stream
There rest my remnant out, and dream
Neath shadows sweet.

Where willows fanned by soft winds, sweep
O'er waters, whose low murmuring calls
On toward Lethe, till life falls
In dreamless sleep.



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